

AGNES DE MANSFELT :

A Historical Tale.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

THE HEIRESS OF BRUGES," "JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND,"
"HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS," ETC.

"Manifold matters of recreation, police, love adventures, etc., abundant-
ly administered ; and all in the golden reign of blessed Queen Elizabeth,
the sweetest floure of amiable virginittie." — *Epistle to Stow's Chronicles*.

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INTRODUCTORY.

HISTORICAL parallels, whether of persons or events, show generally more ingenuity than truth. They are seldom as instructive as they are amusing, and are rarely turned to the good purposes of effective example. But few transactions in the history of any given nation resemble each other more than the Congress of Cologne, two centuries and a half ago, and the Conference of London in our own days : both held for the special and final arrangement of the affairs of the Netherlands.

It is only necessary to refer to the records of those negotiations to establish the general resemblance. The main difference is that Holland was then in the position which Belgium so lately occupied ; the very country which had laboured to throw off a foreign yoke, afterwards striving to maintain an unjust dominion — its people being so changed in character as to follow the example it long and successfully struggled against. It is certainly striking and singular that the late King of Holland should have stood precisely in the situation which the King of Spain occupied in the olden time, retarding and frustrating by self-willed intolerance the settlement which he knew to be inevitable. It is not, indeed, on the same grounds which supported Philip II. that William I. took his stand. And far be it from us to insinuate any general resemblance between the bigot tyrant of old and the constitutional monarch of modern days. It is only on the score of obstinate perseverance that the analogy exists ; religious fanaticism being mainly the basis of the one, and commercial selfishness of the other. As for all the minor details — the joint protection afforded by France and England to the newly-established state ; the refusal, by the rejected dynasty, to acknowledge its chief governor enthroned at Brussels ; the twenty-seven articles on the one hand and the twenty-four articles on the other ; the hollow arbitration of the emperor (Russia and

Prussia did not then politically exist to form the trinity of despotism); the bad faith and jealousy of some governments; and the tortuous shifts of diplomacy—they show a similitude so marvellous that it seems as if the master spirits of this age were forced to model their course on the errors of one which, in common cases, they no doubt abhor and despise.

All Europe was harassed and convulsed by “the Dutch and Belgic question” of the sixteenth century. To bring it if possible to a termination by means of amicable discussion, commissioners were appointed by common consent, including many men of high rank and some of consummate talent; and this memorable congress assembled in the ancient city of Cologne early in the spring of the year 1579.

The eminent persons composing the congress would have felt it little consistent with their dignity to come to the rendezvous in the unostentatious guise of modern statesmen. The spirit of the times is happily changed; and people are now rapidly losing the veneration for factitious display which was one great cause of the too-long admitted influence of rank whose chief claim to distinction was riches.

The important occasion we now allude to brought together three archbishops—two of them electors of the empire, and one the pope’s nuncio—one bishop, two dukes, one count, various abbots, seigneurs, counsellors, intendants, jurisconsults and secretaries; besides a crowd of unofficial individuals, attracted to the scene and illegitimate actors in it, for the purposes of the many princes, potentates, and pretenders whose interests were involved in the great questions to be debated.

Considerable magnificence was displayed by this assemblage of functionaries. Their numerous followers and splendid retinues filled the houses of entertainment; while the influx of visitors, more or less connected with them, left little room, even in private mansions, for the casual travellers who resorted to the city during the long course of the negotiations. Cologne had rarely been the scene of such splendour, such debauchery, and such intrigue. And the long-past glories of Roman, Franc, and Hun, of emperors, kings, and conquerors, were eclipsed, and for awhile forgotten, in the extravagance of the epoch we describe.

But we trust our readers will not take the alarm, nor imagine that, under the guise of a historical tale, we are about to

inflict on them a political romance. We disclaim all the awful pretensions implied in such an attempt; we disown all notion of making a story of past times a covert satire on those in which we live. If, indeed, in the course of our narrative events of history invite remark, as the individuals we introduce require description, we shall not shrink—any more than on former occasions—from hazarding an opinion, albeit in opposition to some of those which are called “received” ones. But with regard to this diplomatic pantomime, so rich in tricks and transformations, so far from introducing it by design or meaning to dwell on it, we never should have mentioned it at all, had it not been in the midst of its gorgeous display that our heroine made her first appearance on the public scene of life, and that she owed to its records her introduction to the broad pages of history.

That the serious purpose of the congress might commence with suitable solemnity, and in the hope of frustrating the many sinister attempts which were at work to counteract its intended good effects, the members unanimously agreed to proceed to business under the auspices of religion; “beginning,” as one of the historians observes, “with God himself.” Prayers were put up to Heaven for divine assistance in the important task; and, at the suggestion of Ghebhard Truchses, the Elector-archbishop of Cologne, a procession of the Sacred Host, and all its auxiliary pomps, was fixed on, as the first step in the mighty affair, it being however doubtful to the before-cited author whether the prince-prelate was “inspired by a wish for the public weal, or that it was a pretext of this personage, who assumed an appearance of piety for better securing the archiepiscopal throne, the possession of which had been long disputed.”

The solution of this doubt may be found in the progress of our story, on which we forthwith proceed to enter.

P R E F A C E

TO

THE PRESENT EDITION.

THIS third, and last, of my Historical Novels now finds its place in a Collection which gives to it and its fellows a wider circulation than they could attain in the original form of publication usually chosen for writings of their class.

Independent of the pleasure of seeing these volumes taking a permanent stand among contemporary productions, I have great satisfaction in a better chance being thus afforded for exciting an interest in general readers towards the chief personages of the present tale. They have been dealt hardly with by bigoted and prejudiced pens of their own period; and it requires both research and toleration to do them justice. A mere compiler of facts, as they are handed down by hostile or lukewarm chroniclers, could scarcely do it now. Truth, even though it be naked, requires sometimes an atmosphere of imagination to make it clearly understood.

If the novelist occasionally takes liberties with the characters he portrays, the historian too often does them more grievous harm. Each picture has its faults. In the first there may be too high colouring; in the latter too much shade. Romance may exaggerate, while reality must suppress. And it may be, after all, that the embellishments of fiction are not less true to nature than the harsh, dry statements of fact. It is a common saying, and a frequent error, that men's characters are known by their actions. Were their motives always laid bare, they would many a time be found entirely at variance with deeds which either raise or ruin a reputation.

This much may be permitted to the author, who has

ventured to delineate the mind's workings of two beings as the novice of Gerisheim and the prelate of Cologne. Those who would follow a subject in works of more pretension, should, to understanding of it, do so in the scenes of the adventure which at any rate are real. The neighbourhood of the Rhine, on the banks of which this preface is written, is the theatre of those adventures. Its cities, its ruins, its hills and valleys, its waters and its sky, are the elements and paniments required for the study of characters who were developed under their influence, and of events which sprung from so exciting a source. I am, as I am for my own part, glad that chance has thrown me again into the very scenes where I conceived and executed the performance; and which enable me to enjoy, though they may possibly blind me to the errors of, the pages I am here revise, though I might not be able now to correct, and am, perhaps, still unfitted to correct them.

Without making any rash vow, I may with tolerable safety say, that I shall never again attempt a work of fiction. Should some of my earlier tales have heretofore the advantage of appearing in this form, they may be received, as I trust the present Volume will be, with the indulgence accorded to productions of a time of youth that may excuse some exuberance of feeling and expression; and allowance should be made for the difficulty of pruning in after years, without, at the same time, spoiling the effect (such as it may be) of what were received in their day, with popular favour far beyond their claims.

As exceptions have been taken to the aspect in which Queen Elizabeth is presented in this work, I think it well to state, that the incident in which she figures, and the superstitious fancy ascribed to her, are in strict accordance with the traditions of my heroine's history.

Abstaining from minute references to the many sources which furnished materials for my romance, I shall be satisfied now, when the temptation is even stronger than when it was written, to request the reader's attention to the brief note at the end of the volume.

T. C. GRATTAN.

Bonn, June, 1847.

AGNES DE MANSFELT.

CHAPTER I.

It was early morning, yet the whole population of Cologne and the surrounding neighbourhood was abroad, in the streets and squares of that most ancient city. It was working day, yet burgher and boor, artisan and peasant, had alike donned their sabbath attire, and shone forth in all the bravery of their picturesque costumes. It was April, scarcely April, that capricious month of smiles and tears, when the budding hopes of one hour are so often nipped by the next, and the young spring, like a new-fledged bird, shrinks fluttering ere it trusts itself on the expanse of time — yet the air was soft, and the sun as warm and bright as when it smiles on the gay groups of a summer fête. The bells from a hundred steeples rung forth joyous peals; culverins and falconets sent their voices out from every fort and bastion in the walled circle of two leagues, by which the city was girded. Bands of martial music tempered the discord by their melody; and sound, in all its wild varieties, thrilled confusedly through the air, and baffled the mimicry of the surrounding echoes.

While heaven and man thus combined to do honour to the day, heaven's fairest work, and man's brightest inspiration was not wanting, to throw a grace over the otherwise imperfect scene. Woman, in her most attractive forms, moved along the promenades, leaned from the windows, or stood on platforms, to gaze unobstructed at the spectacle below.

Of the many groups so placed, which caught the observation of the passers-by, and checked their impatient longing for the appearance of the procession, one, which occupied the heavy sculptured balcony of a mansion fronting the church of St. Columba, was peculiarly attractive. It consisted of four females, young, lovely, and dressed in a fashion that bespoke them of high rank. He must have been indeed a stranger in

Cologne, who did not know the residence of the bold Baron Conrad von Kriechlingen ; while the inquisitive soon learned the names of the noble houses to which belonged the liveried varlets who lounged at the portal with those of the family. The still more curious quickly found out that with the baron's two daughters above, were their visitors, Anne, the youthful wife of John Casimir, Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and Agnes, only daughter of John George, late Count of Mansfelt.

"And how, worthy and worshipful sir," asked an old woman, of tottering gait and stooping figure, who plied closely with questions the pompous functionary who bore the title of baronial gate-opener to the family of Kriechlingen, "how may the eyes that mark yon blooming group of young beauties distinguish the matron from the maidens ; and then know one of the latter from the others ? "

"In good sooth, dame, 'twould seem as though some more than common motive spurred on your questionings ? Is it so ? " said the concierge.

"And what if it were, kind master ? " replied the crone, with a keen and crafty tone of voice, that seemed at once to admit and justify an unacknowledged object. "What if I *had* some cause beyond an old wife's gossiping, for seeking to know the Duchess Anne from the fair virgins she consorts with ? "

"Oh, it is thus ? another suitor for the bounty of the generous Duchess Anne ; verily her fame for charity has travelled before her, albeit she came and stays here incognito ; and well needs her purse to be lined, if every twenty-four hours of her visit bring applicants in proportion to the one day she has been in Cologne already. Good woman. I cannot be accessory to her highness's annoyance. I prithee, go thy ways, nor seek to interrupt the noble lady's pleasures by a suit that's out of season."

"And how know you, good sir, that the pleasures of the princess, ay, her very happiness and welfare, may not be at stake, may not depend on the receipt of this previous missive ? "

As she uttered these words, the speaker drew from beneath her cloak a letter, which the porter instantly saw to be far different from the coarse texture and vulgar shape of a petition for alms. It was of coloured paper, tastefully folded, and

tied with fantastic knots of ribbon, to one of which was attached a pendant seal, while it emitted a sweet odour that seemed much to sooth the rising asperity of the porter's feelings. An apparent accident, which happened at the moment, might perchance have had some mollifying influence of the same nature. A small leathern bag, fastened with a ring of wire, dropped from the old woman's girdle, and its chink on the pavement sounded marvellously harmonious. The porter stooped to lift it up ; and, maugre a portly paunch and the joint-stiffening action of sixty summers, he bent double, with a promptness not exceeded by the most supple examples of court prostration.

The old woman did not oppose him, but faintly laughed as with a malicious triumph, while he raised his apoplectic face to a level with her own (which, however, she instantly turned aside), presenting her the bag at the same time, and puffing forth an apology in these terms —

“ Respectable and well-born dame, I crave your pardon humbly, for my rude mistake and over-hasty speech. Ay, verily, are my eyes waxing old and dim, or I should easily have seen by your air and bearing, in despite of modest though by no means unbecoming attire — for, sooth to say, this bodice of orange-tawney kersey with rabbit-skin trimmings goes well with the shades of brown in this ingrain mantle and hood, and suits no doubt the features and complexion of the staid, yet, I warrant me, still comely wearer. Ay, easily should I have seen, but for this teasing rheum which mars my vision, that I spoke to the worthy wife or mother of some substantial citizen. Would it please you, good dame, to enter into my lodge here a bit, and look out unobstructed from the postern window on the great procession, which must even now have started from the palace, and will pass through our neighbourhood anon ! ”

The object of this courtesy seemed to take it all with a perfect business-like indifference, as though such sudden shifts of opinion and manners were familiar to her experience, and that their secret springs were not too deep for her philosophy.

“ Good master porter,” said she, moving under the porch the while, “ you put me to shame by your civilities, for I cannot accept them ; half, as it were, by reason of my own

unworthiness, and the other half from the pressing necessity of others' concerns, which hurries me away. In a word, kind sir, will you undertake to deliver this letter into Duchess Anne's fair hands, secretly and quickly?"

"Why, for the slight service of passing on a letter, so complaisant and courteous as this seems to be," resumed the porter, watching keenly the movements of the crone, whose fingers leisurely undid the fastening of her money-bag, "for such a good turn, and all in the way of mine office, I would not willingly stand on punctilios of mere place. I think I might contrive to send the billet through the duchess's varlet yonder, to her highness's tire-woman, and so by toilette-time to-morrow into her own fair hand, or at least so place it that it should fall under her own bright eye."

"Kind thanks for your good offices," replied the old woman, coldly, while she replaced the purse in her girdle. "No, master porter, no. Such snail's pace, round-about proceedings are not of fitting gait for the rapid flow of hot, and youthful, and noble blood. And did such means suit the purpose of the princely — I would say the lordly, or needs let it be simply the well-born writer, for I would not willingly betray his noble confidence — the letter might have been delivered at the door of your lodge, by secretary or serving-man, and sent up through the beaten road of common correspondence. No, master porter, no! and good day to you."

"Nay, nay, go not away in pique or unkindness, good dame," said the porter, alarmed at the threatened loss of his vails, and laying a gentle hand on his companion's cloak, with a wheedling look and a forced chuckle, as he added, "by the bones of the eleven thousand, I wish to do the good turn you ask me! A prince did you not say, or at least a noble of note — eh? and ——"

"Well then, at once, and without words," said his companion briskly, at the same time placing a small gold piece in his palm, which surely had itched intensely during the previous colloquy, "at once and for all, will you or will you not put this letter into the hands of the duchess, now, at the instant?"

"Reckon on me, as soon as ever the procession passes," whispered the porter, putting the letter between his doublet and pourpoint, and closing his fingers on the piece of gold.

"Good fellow, you know not the danger of delay, or you would not prose and chatter in this guise. There is another ducat to quicken your senses—now, on the instant, give the letter with your own hands, and remember! a keen eye is watching you. Here they come — farewell! we shall meet again."

As these words were rapidly uttered, and while the speaker darted away in the crowd, with the activity of boyhood, and (as Karl Kreutzer, the conscientious porter, piously swore) with the suddenly-acquired height of well-grown manhood, he felt his breath to come and go; and his eyes swam, and his knees shook, for he thought that voice, air, and gesture, were all supernaturally awful. A pang seemed shot through his heart, from the mere vicinage of the letter. To have relieved himself, he would have thrown it into the street, and the money along with it, had not a sudden throb of fear held one hand firm on the mysterious paper, and an occult instinct of avarice thrust the other into the deep, wide pocket of his crimson plush *pluderhosen*.

While he stood bewildered and uncertain, the loud crash of music and the chant of voices told him the procession was near at hand. The rush of people in all directions warned him of it in another sense. And the boisterous entreaties for admission into the lodge, from several persons who pushed towards the portal, were the completing proofs that he had no time to lose.

"Do, good Master Karl!"

"Kind Karl, one place in the postern window!"

"Just enough room for this child, worthy Master Kreutzer!"

"'Tis only me, Karl, your friend Caspar Schott, don't you know me?"

"Good Karl Kreutzer" — "Gentle Karl" — "Sweet Master Karl!"

These and a dozen still more coaxing blandishments were forcibly showered upon the agitated functionary; but every epithet in honour of his tenderness met a practical refutation, in the sturdy blows dealt round by his baton of office, and the maledictions which he profusely scattered among the invaders.

"May the curse of the three kings light on and blight ye

all, scurvy rabble that ye are! Stand back, I say! Out on ye, knaves, out on ye! *Potz tausend!* Begone, I say — no man enters here. Thunder and lightning! aback, aback, I say!"

And having at length succeeded in stemming the living torrent, Karl Kreutzer forcibly closed the ponderous gates, and for perfect security against intrusion he fastened the iron chain across; then wiping the plentiful moisture from his brow, adjusting his disordered and loose-fitting habiliments, and shaking himself into his place again, as it might be said, he hastily mounted the broad stone staircase, bethinking him of what excuse he might best make for demanding short and instant speech with the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg. The most plausible was the pretext of some alms-asking suppliant pressing forward a petition on urgent need. The heavy-headed porter could invent no better on such short notice; and such was the reason assigned for praying the princess to come forth, when, in virtue of his old prescriptive right of admission, he obsequiously entered the great gallery, and approached the balcony where the four ladies were standing.

Anne of Saxe-Coburg started, with a feeling of instinctive alarm, when Karl Kreutzer clumsily stammered forth his untoward request.

"Nay, duchess! think not of it now — the procession comes — it enters the Kirchgasse — in a few minutes it will be here."

"Good Karl, thou hast ill-timed this intrusion on her highness," said the two daughters of Baron Kriechlingen, speaking together, but dividing those sentences between them.

"Dear young ladies, oppose me not," said Karl, with solemn agitation and a stupidly important air, enough to betray any secret to more suspicious observers. "Let her worshipful highness the duchess come out to receive the letter — that is to say the petition — which the prince — the pauper, I mean — would lay in her own gracious hand. It is of pressing import, believe me, ladies."

"I know it: I *feel* it to be so!" exclaimed the duchess, with a suppressed and heavy tone; and so saying, she stepped to the ante-room beyond the gallery, where Karl immediately and stealthily slipped the letter into her hand, without saying a word, and then hurried away, thanking heaven that he had

eased his bosom of "the perilous stuff" which had lain so heavily on it for the previous ten minutes.

The duchess tore open the ribbon-clasped envelope, and read the following words: — "I shall be in the procession to-day; *know me not!* At thy deep and deadly risk be the hazard of a recognition."

"O God!" exclaimed the princess, the colour flying from her cheeks and lips, as her sinking heart convulsively drew in the life-blood from every artery of her frame, "is he then *here*? Am I nowhere safe?"

She sunk on a cushioned bench that stood closely by, and might have fainted, had not the quick steps of her young and impatient hostesses coming to seek her, startled her into life again. Hurriedly thrusting the warning billet into the bosom of her dress, she tottered inwards and reached the balcony, as though attracted by an irresistible spell. Fortunately for her secret wishes neither of the sisters perceived her emotion. They thought only of the coming procession, and leaned anxiously over the balustrade to mark it, as it turned the corner and entered the open space between their father's house and the church. But another and a far differently constituted person was at hand, to catch every shade which secret suffering threw over the fair face of the young duchess, and to feel, in the purest depths of friendship, the reflected gloom from the sorrows of her she loved. This person was Agnes de Mansfelt.

Anne of Saxony, wife of a sovereign duke, daughter of an electoral prince, and granddaughter of a king, for her mother was a princess of Denmark, was of more elevated rank but scarcely of prouder lineage than the chosen and dear-loved friend of her youth, the heroine of our tale. Agnes was of a family conspicuous among the most distinguished of Germany. The race of Mansfelt reckoned among its members an emperor, a count-palatine, several minor princes, with archbishops and bishops innumerable; and many were their intermarriages with the royal houses of Europe. The pretensions of this proud family were of the highest order. They signed themselves counts, "by the grace of God," and pushed to the utmost their title to "right divine." They had maintained for ages fierce and independent wars with their neighbours, ravaged the territories of their enemies, quarrelled with their friends, fell out among each other; and proved themselves, in

short, to be in all ways deserving of high note among the worthies of that monstrous anomaly in social relations known by the name of the feudal system.

But whatever might have been their power or their pretensions in elder days, both had rapidly declined in the course of the sixteenth century. As their revenues diminished, their debts accumulated; they were often obliged to sell, at great loss, their lands and offices of state, to satisfy their creditors, and improvidence and misrule seem to have been handed down as heirlooms from generation to generation. At the accession of Count John George, the father of Agnes, his hereditary debts amounted to two millions of florins, and his entire dominions were sequestered. He was, like most of his race, extravagant; and the desperation of his fortunes tended, perhaps, to make him even more reckless than the rest. He embraced the tenets of Luther, to whom he was well known. That stalwart reformer tells us in his works that he had severely remonstrated with the count for the prodigality of his career. And it is recorded, that the pastor of Wittenberg (on one of those domiciliary visits), having entered the castle of Mansfelt, and being about to mount the stairs, observed that the steps were flooded with wine. On inquiring the cause, he learned that the count was carousing with his friends, on which Luther cast his looks towards heaven, and raising his hands with gesture suiting his usual bold and vigorous eloquence, he prophesied that such profusion could not go unpunished, but that the time was not distant when the grass would grow in the desert halls, which then witnessed such criminal excess.

Alas for our heroine, that the foretelling of the great reformer should have been so well deserved and so soon fulfilled! Her brave, but too prodigal parent had ere long little left him but a good weapon and a dauntless heart. He chose from the castle armoury its greatest treasure and the boast of his line, the sword of the celebrated Count Hoyers — bade farewell to the valley of Mansfelt, in Upper Thuringia, his birth-place and the seat of his fathers for countless ages — fought long and gallantly under the celebrated Maurice of Saxony for the cause of religious liberty; and thus redeeming his errors, died at length the founder of the *Eislebischen*, or Lutheran race, leaving to his three sons little but their titles,

and to his only daughter the painful heritage of a proud name steeped in the bitterness of poverty.

Fortuneless, but not friendless, the young and most beautiful Agnes had many offers of protection, and numberless invitations from her high and mighty connexions. Of these she availed herself insomuch as pride and prudence told her was becoming. Anne of Saxony, the niece of Maurice, her father's companion in arms, was the first to fly to her orphan friend, and the most zealously cordial in offers of a home, more suiting a young and lovely girl than the drear halls of Mansfelt Castle. Agnes frankly accepted the offers so generously made. She had no qualms of spurious delicacy. The mind that is imbued with the genuine sort knows not the counterfeit; and the mind of Agnes—but that must be judged of by the sequel.

When the Princess Anne—yielding to the warm solicitings of John Casimir, Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and to the commands of her father, Augustus, Elector of Saxony—married too hastily for her future happiness, and left the life-stirring palaces of Dresden for her husband's solitary castle, Agnes de Mansfelt was not long in choosing her career.

She envied not the seemingly auspicious fate of her friend, even though she felt it was never likely to be her own. Marriage was a state that appeared beyond the accidents of her destiny. Not that she wanted suitors—she had too many for her own peace—but from reasons, or rather feelings, to be developed as we go on, she saw in each new offer fresh causes for rejection.

At length, from a peculiar reason which shall be in its place explained, she solemnly decided never to marry, and she followed up the unnatural resolution by the best security permitted by her religion. The teasing suit of lovers, with whom she felt no sympathy, was not to be endured. Her heart was too honest to feign affection—too generous to betray indifference—so she resolved to put herself in sanctuary, and escape the double embarrassment. She therefore sought and obtained an appointment as canoness of the Protestant convent of Gerisheim. Under a vow of celibacy for one year, and renewable at pleasure for the same period, she escaped the annoyance of her suitors' addresses. She returned once more to Mansfelt as the mistress of its comparative desolation, sharing

its solitude with her brothers, who inhabited it by turns, or together, as their caprices suggested or their pursuits required; protected, guided, and instructed by the old chaplain and faithful friend of the house, Cyriacus Spangenberg, the disciple of Luther, and the associate of Melancthon in some of his most important theological works, particularly the celebrated "Confession of Augsburg."

The duties of canoness of a Protestant convent were rather nominal than rigid. They required no residence within the walls. They entailed no ceremonies beyond them; they carried no prohibitions of any of the decent and rational pleasures of life which are sanctioned by social forms, with the exception of matrimony for some given period, and that we willingly allow is a state which embraces many of those, and sanctifies them all.

A yearly pension was attached to the title, and a small cross, embroidered on velvet or ribbon, was worn on the left side of the bosom by a crimson string, a simple and sacred decoration, unstained with the deep vanities of many a more glaring badge.

Agnes had rarely availed herself of her privilege of social enjoyment, during the year of her engagement, which was nearly expired, when her relatives, Fredoliada and Emma Von Kriechlingen, pressing invited her to visit them at Cologne, to participate in some of the gaieties prepared for the period of the congress, and to meet her dear-loved friend the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, who had honoured them by demanding a few weeks' hospitality, on condition of every point of ceremony and etiquette connected with her rank being laid aside, and her visit being considered as one of friendship and not of form.

The last inducement, and a pressing letter from the duchess, decided Agnes to accept the summons. The friends met (for the first time since the marriage of Anne, two years previously) on their arrival in Cologne the day before the one on which our story opens. And what a world of mutual confidence did they not, during that day and the night which closed on it, pour into each other's breasts! But the procession? It has long since reached Saint Columbat's platz, and now halts at a reposoir, or temporary altar, erected in advance of the church portal, and consequently fronting the mansion of Baron Von Kriechlingen.

CHAPTER II.

A ROMAN Catholic procession, like all the ceremonies of that gorgeous church, is fitted to excite the feelings in no moderate degree. It must be either profound veneration or deep contempt, which animates the orthodox assistant, or inspires the heretic spectator. No one who sees the spectacle can be wholly indifferent to it. It is an offering worthy of heaven, or a rite degrading to common sense. God is honoured, or man debased. The true attributes of religion are to be defined. There is no medium line. Enthusiasm and reason take conflicting sides of the question, and in such a case what rational mind stands neutral?

Varied were the sensations raised on the occasion before us, in the numerous population of Cologne and its surrounding hamlets and villages, which had all poured out their votaries. The great majority were pious Catholics; but reform had made a progress in the electorate quite correspondent to that in all the southern parts of Germany. Lutheranism had a large body of adherents; and the more rigid doctrines of Calvinism attracted, by a fascinating charm, many an overwrought fanatic to join that withering sect.

On occasions like the present, most of those who disapproved of or were shocked by the ceremony abstained from sanctioning it, even in appearance, by their presence. But several of those who could not join it as a duty, viewed it, as it passed their dwellings, as they would a theatrical exhibition; and all who did, from piety or policy, take a part, entered into it with an energy that evidently sprung from conviction or very successfully assumed its tone. No efforts were spared to render those displays imposingly effective, at a period when zeal for the new doctrines strained the resisting sinews of Romish prerogative to their utmost stretch; and the procession of the 5th April, 1579, is recorded as eclipsing in sumptuous profusion all former outlays of magnificence in Cologne.

We will not fatigue our readers, nor retard our story, by a detailed description of matters which fancy can easily conjure up. Banners, tapers, relics; rich costumes, music, flowers,

and incense ; all that could take the senses by surprise, or soothingly lead them into sympathy, were prodigally and skilfully brought into play. The treasures and triumphs of near two hundred churches, and half as many convents, under the escort of above two thousand priests of various ranks and denominations, testified to the accumulated wealth of the archiepiscopal city. Long files of magistrates, in rich attire, gave evidence of its corporate piety ; and several thousand beggars walking in serried ranks in the tail of the procession, told that conventual and civic charity must have both been great, at once to tolerate and support such a legion of sloth within its walls.

The superbly tapestried and embroidered awning, under which the consecrated Eucharist was carried, now stood still before the reposoir. The "innocents" (as the juvenile choristers were called) and the full-grown singers had ceased their chant. The short service appropriated to those haltings was in the act of being recited by one of the officiating bishops ; and the crowd of glittering costumes, lay and clerical, which surrounded the main group, dazzled the eyes of the spectators, and filled many of those who gazed down upon the scene with burning curiosity, to know by name the various individuals by which it was composed. *Our* group was not wanting in this natural feeling of the occasion, and, as satirists say, this natural failing of the sex. It needs not be told, that it was modified in individual cases according to the characters of the four bright and youthful beings who adorned the balcony. While the two sisters panted with that girlish love of novelty, common, we suppose, to all who have but just been freed from the restraint of conventual education, the two friends, who had been longer in the world and had known more of its ways, were touched with an interest in the event which embraced such serious associations of thought, and in the distinguished agents on whom its management devolved.

Yet far different feelings filled the two bosoms, whose sympathies on this occasion, as in most others, were so congenial, but whose sensations were so varied. Agnes was in her nineteenth year, Anne in her one-and-twentieth. The former had known the anxieties of life, the latter its temptations. One had been reared amid difficulties and trials, the other in the very lap of ease and luxury. The first felt the circumstances

of her station to be unworthy of her ; the second knew that *she* was unsuited to the place she occupied, but which she could not be said to fill. Agnes, from the earliest epoch of mature intelligence, had felt marriage and its mighty maze of delights and duties to be impossibilities for her. Anne, from her youngest days, had been taught that a wedded establishment was in her case an invincible necessity. Fate had seemed to vow one to a state of celibacy, humiliating to loveliness, high intellect, and exquisite susceptibility of happiness ; while destiny threw the other into an union that promised rapture and brought forth misery. Agnes's heart had hitherto known but the restraints of suppressed emotion. That of Anne had felt the chill of blighted hope. Agnes's worst suffering had been wounded pride ; her friend had endured the pangs of crushed affection.

It has been already shown that the duchess of Saxe-Coburg had some secret cause of mental pain, of which Agnes had received a partial confidence the previous day. But she knew nothing of the mysterious warning of which we have informed our readers. Therefore she felt not, even by sympathy, the agitation of her friend ; but if not to the full as anxious (for no one can make the case of another absolutely their own) she certainly looked more so ; for her countenance was always the true reflection of a mind of almost unequalled singleness and sincerity ; while Anne, on the contrary, had a command of feature and a flexibility of tone, that allowed her to wear a smile or feign a laugh, when the spring that set one in motion, or the chords that attuned the other, had their workings in the very depths of an anguished heart. They both fixed their looks intently on the picturesque crowd beneath ; and, no matter what their separate feelings, they could not resist the influence of the imposing scene.

At this moment, a young man, in the uniform of the university of Bonn, announced by a servant as Herr Ulrick Von Leckenstein, advanced along the gallery, and modestly approaching the window which opened into the balcony, he was urgently beckoned forward by his kinswomen Fredolinda and Emma.

" Welcome, welcome, Ulrick ! " exclaimed the latter, who was the younger of the two, " we never were so glad to see you, or wished for you so much — did we, Freda ? "

Her sister, to whom this question was addressed, blushed deeply as she replied that "Cousin Ulrick was always welcome, and that he certainly had arrived opportunely to tell them the names of the personages below." She then muttered an introduction to the duchess and Agnes, but in so confused a way, that the young stranger might have easily confounded one with the other, had not the virgin badge of the canoness told him the distinction.

"Nay, nay, Ulrick, come forward," cried the lively and impatient Emma; "this is always the way with you and Freda. Ye stand blushing and stammering at each other, like children saying their catechism. Come close to us. The duchess and Countess Agnes want you to tell us the names of all those great people, who look so lowly, yet think so highly all the while. Now, quickly run over all the names and point out the persons," continued she, as Ulrick advanced, and placed himself, from respect, close to the duchess, and, from a feeling full as pure and ten times as profound, as far away as possible from the blooming girl he loved, with the fear and trembling of boyhood.

"That venerably cunning-looking old man in the middle, in those superb robes, is of course the nuncio?" asked Emma.

"Yes, that is John Baptiste Costagna, Archbishop of Rossano, and the pope's nuncio, sent by his holiness, Gregory XIII. to take care of his innocent flock of Cologne, now there are so many heretical wolves close to the fold."

"Take care, for heaven's sake, Ulrick," said Fredolinda; "do not smile when you make those observations, for you know our house is marked among the heresies; and perhaps one of the electors themselves might by chance turn his looks this way."

"I declare one of them *has* his eyes fixed on us already," exclaimed Emma. "Which of the archbishops is that, Ulrick? is it our sovereign or his Eminence of Treves, for they say that both are in the procession?"

"I don't like to stare at him, be it which it may," replied Ulrick, avoiding to look directly at the place occupied by the two prince prelates. "But you may be sure that his highness, John of Treves, is too pious to turn even one stray glance on the dangerous temptations of this balcony."

"Then it is our own liege lord, whom I have been so long

longing to see. His eyes are fixed on us like burning-glasses — I hope he is not angry with us."

"Never fear, Emma, his highness can feel nothing but regard for whatever is here. You know he is your father's staunch friend, and you must have heard enough to believe that the sight of beauty is not likely to move him to wrath."

"Really, Ulrick, your college course so near his highness's residence has taught you some of his gallantry. How he stares at us! I wonder if he is praying like the other two archbishops, who gaze so intently on that great golden crucifix?"

Ulrick gave a moment's look towards the elector, and then, with an arch expression, and fixing his eyes on Agnes, he said in his peculiar sly, dry manner —

"In truth I believe his highness *is* at his devotions, and, like his venerable colleagues, the *cross* seems to be the object of his fascination."

Agnes felt her face and neck glow, and she involuntarily cast down her looks and turned her head aside; for she could not now fail to perceive that the ardent eyes of the splendidly attired and princely-looking personage in question were riveted upon her.

Fredolinda had silently enjoyed what she considered the very graceful and rather witty remarks of her cousin. How little critical is the heart towards those it loves! Duchess Anne had neither heard what passed, nor observed the important person whose attentive scrutiny had been the subject of what was said. Her anxious looks had darted into the throng below, and wandered electrically through it. But she did not distinguish the face, the fear of seeing which so irresistibly attracted her piercing gaze; for it is in the very essence of fear to make its victims hearken for the sounds that shock them, or seek the objects they abhor.

"Well, truly the elector is of a striking air, he seems fitter for a soldier than a priest, methinks," observed Fredolinda.

"He is celebrated for his conquests," said Ulrick.

"Nay, cousin, there is satire in all you say of his highness," exclaimed Fredolinda.

"What is that, Ulrick?" briskly asked Emma. "Satire? Oh! pray say it again — I love satire in my heart."

"Because you have no reason to fear it, my pretty cousin," said the student.

"Thanks, most learned and accomplished Herr," said Emma, with mock gravity and courtesying low. "Verily, your studies are completed, you are quite fit to take your degree — you pay compliments like a conjurer."

"A conjurer!" exclaimed the Duchess of Coburg. "Who? where? what did you say?" and as she rapidly put the questions she looked round in startled alarm, as if unconscious of their utterance.

Agnes alone observed deeper than the surface of this incoherent manner. She threw a look of keen affection on her friend. The latter instantly recovered herself, smiled bewitchingly, and addressing Ulrick, told him, "She hoped he had not practised any too serious conjurations on her young friend Emma."

"On me!" exclaimed the light-hearted girl, laughing outright, and so loud that her sister and friends were filled with alarm, lest it might attract the notice of the crowd below; — "on *me*!" repeated she, indifferent to their apprehensions. "No, your highness, Herr Ulrick does not consider me worthy of his spells; it is Freda he practises on; but I think he is sometimes caught in his own snare, for one seems as much bewitched as the other. Not to speak profanely, it reminds me of the old proverb, quoted by Chaplain Spangenberg at breakfast this morning, of the devil being tricked by Sathanus."

"For shame, for shame, Emma!" said Fredolinda, in most tale-telling confusion; "you speak too lightly on serious subjects — you make too free with names; I do not mean mine — or — cousin Ulrick's, but — but —"

"That most respectable potentate the king of darkness, is it not, sister?" and another laugh followed this commentary on poor Freda's confused reproaches, at which even the duchess and Agnes smiled, though not "righte merrilie disposed," as the old chroniclers at times represent their happy heroines. Young Ulrick, who was ready enough in repartee or remark on common subjects, seemed absolutely stultified whenever he was placed, in presence of others, by any means, in juxtaposition with his heart's idol. He now stood silently, and with the look of a criminal whose conscience will not suffer him to plead not guilty.

"Thou art a happy and a giddy creature, Emma," said the duchess, with a heavy sigh, which was far less the breath of envy than of self-conscious comparison.

"I know I am, dear Duchess Anne; I confess my errors; and only wish Martin Luther, Pastor Spangenberg, and the rest of our reverend reformers, had not preached down indulgences, when they preached up heresy. I am sure that I, and Ulrick, and Freda, and many such sinners ——"

"Emma, Emma! I *must* stop that wild-going tongue of thine. Remember that our dear father and the venerable chaplain of Mansfelt are closeted in the book-room close by, and were they to catch these irreverend words ——"

"Nay, Freda, I must interrupt in my turn, aye, and reprove, too! This is hypocrisy, sister of mine, and shifting on the shoulders of thy neighbours what is, mayhap, too heavy for thine own. My father and our reverend old guest are so closely shut up together — and thou knowest it — that neither sight nor sound can enter, lest the abominations of this grand ceremony might shock their eyes or ears."

"Hark!" said Freda, "the little bell rings again; and see the surpliced boys are throwing up the silver incensories towards heaven. How beautiful is that perfumed vapour floating on the air! How sublime that living mass, bowing down at once to the earth! How impressive that faint, tinkling sound, amid the stillness of the crowd!"

"How much more odorous, and beautiful, and solemn, the offering of a single heart, in loneliness and silence, without parade or pageantry! at least so I have been taught, and so feel," said Agnes, turning aside and abruptly checking the animated discussion she felt herself inadvertently led into.

"And I too," rejoined Freda; "that is my creed also, dear Agnes, when I do not look on those exciting spectacles. But they carry me away — I know not why or wherefore."

"You are an enthusiast, Freda."

"Perhaps so; but look down on those thousands, see how they are all absorbed alike, rich and poor, young and old!"

"With the exception of our dread sovereign, yonder," said Emma; "for he still stares at us, as if this balcony was heaven itself. I am sure he takes us for angels. He has absolutely forgotten to kneel down, while all the rest bend to the very rushes that cover the dust."

"If common report be truth, 'tis not the first nor the fiftieth time that gallantry has made him forget religion," said Ulrick.

"What a shame, for so old a man and a prelate!" exclaimed Emma.

"What a pity rather that the same individual should ever be prince and priest together, the prescription of one station running counter to the duties of the other!" observed Agnes.

"Falls in love! oh, shocking!" uttered Emma, in reply to some whispered remark of her cousin.

"Poor man! perhaps he cannot help it," said Freda, in a tone of half languishing sympathy, that made her sister laugh once more, and all the others smile again.

"The procession is preparing to move on. Pray Herr Von Leckenstein, can you be so good as to name those seigneurs who stand close to the prelates? they are the other commissioners, no doubt?" asked the duchess.

"They are so, madam," replied the young student, moving close beside her, and mentioning the names of the most prominent members of the conference; coupling with each some quaint remark, that often made the duchess smile, and all through fixed her attention to what he uttered. While he talked as if inspired by the honour of such close intercourse with a lady of such high rank and such rare beauty, she listened as though she had altogether recovered from her late anxiety.

In this way Ulrick passed in review the Dukes of Terranova and Arschot (the representative of Philip II. of Spain and Mathias the Archduke of the Netherlands) the Bishop of Wurtzburg, Count Otto of Schwartzemburg, and a long train of noble, reverend, legal, and literary functionaries, the greater part of whom he knew by name; and even when he did not, he was rarely at a loss for trait of invention, encouraged by the amusement he seemed to afford his fair listeners.

Freda, influenced it might be by slight pique or passing jealousy at her lover's attention to another, gave the least notice to his observations, and seemed overpowered by the imposing grandeur of the spectacle, and the pious or proud bearing, as it might be, of the chief actors in it. As few of those persons have more than the floating interest of the moment, either in our memory or in the progress of our

tale, we pass by the various observations they called forth, as well as a minute description of their persons. One of them, however, being paramount in our consideration, we must record one passage more of the irregular conversation that related to him.

The head of the procession had moved away, and was lost in the narrow street that led from the platz, or square of Saint Columba. Ulrick was continuing his strain of lively remarks on each new passer-by, and had now descended from the rank of princedom and nobility to the files of burgher aristocracy which had succeeded them. His four listeners seemed thinking only of his strictures on the corporation pride, or factious perversity, of these citizens, when Agnes suddenly asked him,

"Pray what is his age at present?"

"Whose age, madam?" demanded Ulrick, surprised at the abrupt and irrelevant question.

"Oh, the archbishop's——"

"Fair countess, there were three in the procession."

"Well, well, the elector's?"

"Madam, you must fain remember that two prince-electors walked side by side just now."

"I mean your own sovereign, Herr Ulrick; but the question was one of mere curiosity——'tis of no matter."

"Really, Agnes, if that said sovereign of ours paid you homage, you seem to have sworn him allegiance. His exclusive looks are answered by exclusive thoughts," said Emma, with an expression that would have been malicious, if so kind a heart or so pretty a face as her's could have suggested or expressed anything unamiable. Ulrick, wishing to relieve Agnes from a raillery which evidently embarrassed her, answered her question.

"Our elector reckoned thirty-seven summers last August, according to the calendar, but is at least a dozen less in character and habits, if hearsay belie him not."

"Thirty-seven only! and is this what Emma calls so old a man? I should have thought him older," observed Duchess Anne.

"You did not mark him closely," said Agnes; "he appeared to me younger."

"In truth," rejoined the duchess, "I looked more at his

sumptuous garments than at him, and not much at either, for my eye sought another object."

"And, happily I should think, did not find it, dearest Anne," whispered Agnes, pressing her friend's hand tenderly.

"My own, my best friend! no one knows me like you," replied the duchess, in the same tone, returning the pressure, and involuntarily expressing in her looks the heart's pain which sympathy softens, but cannot neutralise. "Oh, Agnes," continued she, "how I long to unburden my breast to you wholly!"

"We shall soon find a time," replied Agnes, turning away towards the sisters and the student, lest they might observe the duchess's emotion, and also from her interest in the subject they continued to discuss—the appearance and character of the archbishop.

"Oh, the latter certainly," said Freda, in reply to Ulrick's question, whether she thought the subject of their remark had more the bearing of a pious prelate or a proud prince? "He wore his mitre as if it were a crown, and he had none of that air of mock or real humility which sat so ill on the other two. While his commanding figure, though encumbered by his robe, and not more than the middle height——"

"Rather under it," said Ulrick.

"Indeed! I should have said above it," exclaimed Agnes.

"That's only grateful of you, Agnes, for *you* certainly filled a large space in his highness's eyes," observed Emma, in her half careless, half cunning way.

"The drapery of his vestments, and the form of his mitre, add apparently to his stature," said Ulrick, not regarding Emma's words or looks, and as if glad to interpose between them and Agnes, whose natural fine colour received a deeper tinge, from every passing breeze of her young relative's raillery."

"I should rather," said she, "attribute the effect to an innate sense of superiority, which naturally gives the carriage an elevated air;" and as Agnes uttered the opinion, she inadvertently illustrated it by a proud, but by no means affected, movement of her whole person, which did not exceed the common height of well-grown womanhood, and which, it may here be added, was a model of delicate yet voluptuous proportion. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg was taller, slighter,

and, in the common notion, of more dignified mien. Neither of the sisters were quite as tall as Agnes; but they had respectively two or three years to grow up to her stature. To surpass her in graceful elegance of form was only in the compass of a miracle.

"There is, no doubt, much truth in Countess Agnes's remark," said Ulrick; "the elector is of a great and confident ambition. He notoriously considers his career a doomed one, and is said to have never yet failed in any object of his life, public or private."

"A doomed career! on what grounds?" asked Freda, caught by the romantic notion.

"Your highness has no doubt heard the incident of Archbishop Ghebhard's early life? and Countess Agnes too, perhaps?" asked the student, turning to the stranger ladies; they bowed assent.

"But I have not, Ulrick," said Freda, somewhat reproachfully.

"Nor I," echoed Emma, "they never told us those heart-stirring stories in the convent."

"Truly, fair cousins," rejoined Ulrick, with a serious and half dissatisfied tone, "what ye have already heard and seen of his highness and his character seems to have filled your minds altogether."

"Jealousy, jealousy!" exclaimed Emma, with her usual laugh of most genuine and musical enjoyment. "Cousin Ulrick already jealous, and of the old archbishop! Nay, nay, do not look angry, or knit your brows at me, Ulrick. No, nor throw that coaxing leer now, to bribe me to silence—it is true—it is true! Cousin Ulrick is jealous of the archbishop."

"You had better tell her the story," said Agnes, smiling the while. The duchess did as much. Even Freda enjoyed what she thought a just punishment to her lover; and he, feeling that he looked foolish as well as faulty, agreed with Agnes; and with a forced laugh endeavouring to silence the real one he had raised, he related the well-known anecdote, that while Ghebhard Truchses, then only a simple canon just in orders, happening to be present at a fête given at Antwerp to the Archduchess Anne of Austria, and passing under one of the triumphal arches erected in her honour, a scutcheon with the armorial bearings of the Electorate of Cologne, which with

those of the other princes of the empire formed part of the decorations, fell on his hat, but without doing any injury. He instantly declared that it was a presage of his future greatness; and following up the omen, he never paused in his efforts, until, by his talents and the influence of his friends, he obtained the important dignity which made the emblazoned honours his own.

"What a noble character of energy and courage that must be!" exclaimed Freda, glowing with the generous sympathy of an enthusiastic mind.

"Did you know a thousandth part of the obstacles that opposed his path, and the difficulties that even now beset him in maintaining his dignity, you would feel even more strongly for him, dear Freda," said Ulrick, catching the impulse which inspired her.

"I know he has many enemies in this bigot city. Why does he not come here oftener?"

"You have just given the reason. He hates the place, and I might add all in it, with the exception of your father and a few other faithful friends."

"And therefore he resides at Bonn?"

"Exactly, where he does not sleep on a bed of roses."

"You sometimes see the elector at Bonn?" asked Agnes.

"He occasionally admits me to the honour of dining at his table."

"You know him personally, then?" said Agnes; but she checked the questions that were rising to her lips, recollecting that the laughing eye of Emma was fixed on her, and her tongue still untied.

At the same moment Duchess Anne caught her arm with a convulsive grasp, uttering some imperfect exclamation, while she quickly turned her look from the street, and left the balcony in evident agitation. But having found a seat, she instantly recovered herself, and assured her alarmed friends that she had only suffered from a momentary pain—in side or head—she forgot which, it was so rapidly over. And she insisted and implored that they should all resume their places, and observe the conclusion of the procession.

There was something too serious in her manner to admit of refusal or delay. Agnes and the others stepped back into the balcony, and thence turned their looks again beyond; nothing

remarkable caught their eyes, till in the very closing ranks of the *cortège* they observed a carriage so remarkable in its equipment as to excite in the throng around it, an astonishment and curiosity still greater than their own. It was covered with gilding, and so splendidly ornamented, that it seemed, with its six milk-white horses and richly-liveried lacqueys, to have been produced by the wand of some enchanter; Cologne had never seen any equipage half so elegant; and it was escorted by twenty mounted cavaliers, all bearing the same distinctive badge and colours, which profusely glittered on the vehicle itself.

Within it reclined, in an attitude of cold dignity, as if unconscious of his greatness or indifferent to the wonderment it caused, a man, magnificently dressed, of a good person, but a countenance neither handsome nor pleasing, and of about thirty years of age. As his equipage and train defiled under the balcony, he took off his plumed cap, rose in his seat, and with easy condescension saluted the group above. They returned his bows by gentle inclinations of the head; and silently wondering at this splendid apparition, they followed it with their eyes till it had quite disappeared; the sounds of the musicians and choristers gradually dying away in the distance, the crowd silently moving on, and soon leaving St. Columba's platz quite lone and deserted. Then only did the young friends join the duchess, who received them as usual, with forced gaiety and woe-concealing smiles.

CHAPTER III.

WITHIN a couple of hours following the scene we have just described, the procession had trained its slow length through the principal streets, halted at the several stations, and finally reached the cathedral, that sublime abortion of architectural magnificence, which, beginning to crumble ere it could be completed, stands a rare monument of the too ambitious fate of genius; for the name of him who planned the mighty structure is now as unknown as those of the ignoble artisans who raised its hundred columns, the clustered shafts and flower-wreathed capitals of

which look like the petrified section of some giant forest. Many another moral may be found by those who seek for such, in this vast emblem of sectarian power stricken midway in its path of pride. And what lessons of taste does it not convey? not merely to the votary of art who lauds its light-sprung arches, its groined ceilings, its chiselled pillars, or its massive walls, but to the worshipper of nature, who sees even in the corruption of decay such exquisite traces of beauty. There is not a ruin of the Rhine — and where do they abound so beautiful as on its banks? — that does not tell us, like this mightiest of them all, that time is the true master of the picturesque. He does not sweep in vulgar flight, the commonplace devourer of man's triumphs. Even where he destroys he defaces not. Every mark of his tooth leaves a trait of loveliness, every feather of his wing a tint of grace.

The solemn service of high mass, in which the several dignitaries before-named all bore a part, had now fitly concluded the ceremonies of the day; the dense masses of spectators which filled the cathedral gradually melted away into fractional groups; and appetite, which disperses a crowd quicker than the riot act, and attracts individuals to their homes more surely than any other sense of duty, began to exert its universal influence. Carriages were in waiting at the doors of the holy structure for the several high personages. They all soon reached their various residences. We must accompany him who interests us most, the Elector Ghebbard, and fancy ourselves arrived with him at the old and gloom-inspiring archiepiscopal palace. It must be observed, that as the state carriage conveyed this sovereign through the streets of the chief city — though Bonn, as being his residence, was considered the capital — no gratulatory shouts or popular compliments gave him escort. Instead of those sounds, the most grateful to the ear of power, the clattering hoofs of his soldier-guard, the rattle of their armour and accoutrements, and the brazen-breath fanfare of noisy trumpets, were the only signals of his progress. Few doffed their caps, or stopped on the way in token of respect; and even those who did so were more influenced by veneration for the mitre than attachment to the man. But none bowed to him in real reverence, and “not one cried God bless him!”

The elector seemed little affected by these silent evidences

of unpopularity, yet there was at times an involuntary frown on his haughty brow, and his sensual lip was now and then slightly curled, when some rude fellow gave too evident a token of disrespect. As he alighted from his vehicle, and mounted the palace steps with an air of bold authority, a rough voice from one of the bystanders muttered some words, of which he caught only the last spoken.

"A heretic in his heart; but we shall soon have a true believer in his place."

As Ghebbard caught this plain allusion to his religious principles and open threat against his authority, he stopped short, sternly fixed his eyes on the speaker, and then, resuming his way, entered the palace porch, and passed on between files of liveried serving-men, into an attendant group of household officers and other members of his princely establishment.

Scarcely had he disappeared among his train, when the same voice which had uttered the insulting words, cried out loudly,

"Long live Ernest of Bavaria! Long live the Bishop of Liege!"

And shouts soon arose, mingled with expressions of still more direct sedition.

"Down with the mitred heretic! Down with false Ghebbard! Ernest for ever!" were now the watchwords of riot. The stragglers, who had acted with no premeditated plan, pressed round the portico of the palace; and he who had begun the tumult led the way, with violent gestures, calling aloud to the others to "follow him and do justice on the tyrant renegade within."

At this critical moment the young lieutenant who commanded the elector's cavalry escort ordered his men to charge at once upon the rioters. These were no times for forms of civil ceremony. The sword blade, the lance's point, or the trampling hoofs of the horses, were the warning summonses in the name of the law, for the law was little better than brute force. And, sooth to say, the bold burghers of those fighting days did not stand on nice points of etiquette, when they in their turns assailed the hired heroes of feudality. Bludgeon, and bill, and axe, or any other tool of civil war, were readily grasped and promptly brought into play, in the

eternal tumults of the good old times ; and a sudden whack on the morion, a cleft skull, or maimed limb, was often the first notice given to the earliest victim of a popular revolt.

In the present instance a rapier, guided by a nervous arm, laid its sharp length on the countenance of the rude leader of the mob, before he had time to repeat his war-cry ; and a gash of most frightful dimensions from brow to chin, gave him wherewithal to remember the day to his life's end, whenever he trimmed his beard or anointed his mustachios before a looking-glass. His unprepared and frightened associates fled like scattered sheep in all directions. The officer, not liking to risk his troops, in the narrow and lane-like streets around, offered no pursuit. The wounded culprit was carried off to prison, and the rest of the city knew nothing of this local accident, for such it was, and no more.

But the elector, attracted to one of the windows by the tumult, had seen the greater part of the transaction ; and he resolved to reward, in his own way, and on the spot, the active exertions of the lieutenant. He ordered him to be brought into his presence ; and the young man, on entering the chamber to which he had retired, found him, with the aid of his valet, throwing off his heavy and thick embroidered vestments with a careless air.

" So, young sir," said the elector. " How comes it that you, with such slight ceremony —— "

" May it please your highness, they told me to enter. It is not my fault," exclaimed the officer, in alarmed mistake of his sovereign's meaning, and in ignorance of his peculiar manner.

" Nay, stay where you are. I would talk with you," said the latter, stopping the lieutenant's quick movement of retreat. " Why was it that you, with so small respect, charged on those worthy citizens -

" Worthy citizens ! Did your highness but -

" And gave such a rude token to that huge artisan of the temper of your rapier and your own ? "

" The ruffian dog spoke treason — rank treason, your highness, and I cut him down."

" What were his words ? "

" What it is little meet your princely ears should be shocked with hearing. I dare not repeat the offensive outrage. The

foul-mouthed villain met but his just punishment; and if I have done wrong I am ready to meet mine."

The high-toned sincerity of these words was pleasant to the elector's ear; he saw with a glance that such a quick spirit might be wanting in the days which were at hand, and he resolved to cherish it. He looked on the young man with an encouraging smile, and his smile was, when he chose it, of sweet and powerful expression.

"You have done gallantly and well in this small matter," said he, graciously, "which gives proof of what I may expect from you on greater occasions. What is your name?"

"I am called Gaspar Von Heyen, may it please your highness."

"It pleases me that you shall be henceforth called Captain Von Heyen. Such is your title from this hour; and until your new warrant can be made out let this signet, which I give you in the warmth of goodwill, and with all the privileges it confers, be the token of your rank. I shall expect you to dine with me to-day, and in half an hour, remember."

The young man, overwhelmed by this unlooked-for turn in the tide which had appeared the moment before to be setting so strongly against him, was unable to make any reply, and stood motionless on the spot.

"I know all you would say, and I will say it for you — to myself, gallant captain," said the elector, smiling again, bowing graciously, and retiring, followed by his valet to an inner room. The new-made captain recovered himself as well and as quickly as he could, put the precious ring on his finger, and stalked forth from the palace to change his buff doublet and huge trooper's boots for a more seemly dinner suit, swelling with that bloated loyalty which is compounded of grateful feeling, self-applause, and tickled vanity."

"Ah, my friend! art thou here already?" exclaimed the elector, as he entered his private cabinet, and found it occupied by a person of noble mien, richly yet plainly dressed, and of about his own age, into whose embrace he almost sprang.

"Dear Nuenar, this is prompt and kind! I could scarcely have reckoned on an answer to my summons, and here thou art!"

"Ghebhard, thou camest as quick, and quicker in *my* time

of need — would that I had the might as I have the will to serve thee."

"Thou hast it, Nuenar, and I need it all. Sit thee down and list to me."

Count Nuenar obeyed the wish of his old and intimate friend; while the elector, dismissing his attendant, walked to and fro, disencumbering himself of the remainder of his gaudy trappings, and talking the while.

"My brow is easier, now that I have doffed the mitre; see, Nuenar, what a mark it leaves on my front:" and as he spoke he stopped before a high and broad mirror of great value and rare dimensions, which stood in a richly carved frame against the wall.

"Aye, now I look once more like a free man," continued he; "thank Heaven, I have cast aside for a while those trammels of church pride! What a penalty I pay in those restraints, for the power I enjoy."

"Dost thou *enjoy* it, Ghebhard?"

"Do I? aye, Adolphus, in my heart's heart! Is it not glorious to lord it over the base herd — and more so still to raise up honest worth, and make a warm heart grow warmer with joy and pride? Even this very instant here, just as I entered, I was able to do both, and that without an effort, by the mere force of the station ——"

"Thou hast so hardly earned."

"True, Nuenar! and which."

"Thou wilt find it harder to preserve?"

"'Tis even so, good Nuenar, and it is for this thou art here to-day."

"Has anything strange occurred? Hast thou unravelled any fresh intrigue?"

"The designs of my enemies now require no unravelling, nor is there any novelty in their base acts. This whole city is a mass of open treason."

"And yet the emperor has sent thee hither, as his umpire in the conference!"

"That I might commit myself in some way with my colleagues, or break into open rupture with the chapter, or that beggarly town council, which dares to thwart every measure I propose, even for their own good."

"And what is the object of all this? where would they

have it end? How comes the emperor, even, a party in the cabal?"

"The object is my ruin, and the cause, as I am told, envy. My friends here and elsewhere say that all is centred in that one word; that I am hated by high and low, because they feel me — as I feel myself! — to tower above them all — in mind at least, if not in might. But that too may come, and even this cringing nuncio crawl at my footstool yet!"

"Ah, Ghebhard! Ghebhard! Does thy ambition take that flight again? I had other hopes for thee."

"Hark thee, Adolphus; I must have power, or I die! I have not yet half drained the intoxicating draught. I would be emperor or pope — aye, or higher still, if worldly rank had yet a loftier station. Nay, look no reproof, my friend, for I am not false to my opinions nor my pledge. I laugh at, even while I loathe, the corrupt abuses of this church in which I am a hierarch. I love reform as well as thou dost, all Lutheran as thou art. Every act of my authority leads to the adoption of the new doctrines throughout my fief; but I cannot turn the flood of public feeling. I must wait till it comes to the full, and take it at its ebb."

"And yet thou wouldst be pope? thou wouldst wear away the impress of the mitre by the tiara's still heavier weight!"

"Tut, tut, Adolphus," exclaimed the elector, laughing, "thou art too precise — thou takest a passing word, the mere type of an ambitious thought, as though I had sworn it for my creed! I said I would be pope or emperor, mark ye, yet no man can be both, nor do I look to be either, believe me, my too matter-of-fact friend. In short, Nuenar, I know not rightly what I say, for I am not quite certain of what I feel. My blood is boiling — this whole scene to-day excites me to the utmost — and one bright vision which crossed the procession's path, has outshone even all the splendour of Heaven and earth, and set my mind a-flame."

"A vision?"

"O Adolphus, how thou wouldst pin me down to terms and definitions! Well, then, it was, in good faith, a form of almost visionary brightness and immortal beauty."

"Oh, a woman!"

"A woman! an angel, Adolphus! I gazed on her with special wonderment and delight, and from a mixed feeling; for,

did I not know that the unfortunate Queen of France, or of Scots, as they choose rather to call her in England, was a dozen years older, and in close durance there, I could have sworn she stood to-day (as I saw her of old in the Louvre gallery) in the open balcony of our good friend, Conrad Von Kriechlingen."

"I never saw the hapless Mary Stuart."

"Nay, but hast thou seen this younger, and full as beautiful copy of that fair model? That is more to the point."

"I know not exactly at what point thou wouldst aim, Ghebbard; but belike it was Duchess Anne of Saxe-Coburg who caught thine eye to-day. A letter from Von Kriechlingen tells me she comes to visit at his house, during the sportive mummeries of this mock peacemaking."

"No, it could not have been she that so struck me, though, doubtless, she was among the group. The brilliant creature who so enamoured — I would say so pleased me — was not a married woman."

"How knowest thou that?"

"By having marked the cross of a canoness, which lay on her fair and heaving bosom."

"Then it was the daughter of John George of Mansfelt, who so fixed you," said Nuenar, amused, but nothing surprised at the graphic minuteness of his more ardent friend.

"I knew not he left a daughter — has she brothers?" asked Ghebbard quickly.

"She *has*, three, at your highness's service," replied Nuenar, with an emphasis, and something like a serious smile, the meaning of which the elector knew, but seemed not to heed.

"Are those young men provided for?"

"Not all, as I have learned — wouldst thou be willing to dispose of them?"

"Count Mansfelt was a gallant knight; the emperor ought not to neglect his children," said Ghebbard, with a careless air, adjusting his dress before the mirror, and seeming to disregard the half sarcastic tone of his friend."

"Wert thou emperor, Ghebbard, his daughter would be —"

"High in my favour, most surely, if her merit bears even small proportion to her beauty; for that I confess myself to worship. Adolphus, she is divine!"

"I doubt it not."

"If thou didst 'twere a heresy worse than that thou art convicted of. But enough of this canoness. I have had sufficient of sacred subjects for to-day, and must give the rest of it to secular concerns. Oh, Nuenar!" continued the elector, a serious air suddenly succeeding to the tone of bantering pleasantry which he had just assumed, and as he spoke he flung himself on a couch beside the chair occupied by his friend, "Is it not hard, my best friend, that I cannot be in all things what I would be, and that even in what I am, I cannot be quite what I wish? What wild thoughts cross my brain! I sometimes fancy myself more than mere humanity; yet often, alas! sink down to less. I feel as though my mind were cast in a mould too large for mortal man's; as if the molten ore of intellect and passion failed ere the cavity was filled, and left the plan imperfect. Every bound of my heart tells me I was meant for happiness: yet I never have been happy. Wild, chequered hours of rapture I have felt. Power I have struggled for and gained — gained to a small extent. Every impulse of my soul leads me towards generous deeds. I have done some good, and how been paid for it! But, oh, Adolphus, how short of all I would do or feel, had I the means of doing or enjoying! Yet I feel destined to high things — to the most eminent reach of bliss!"

The elector started up as he spoke these words, paced the room with animated action, and looked as if a futurity of greatness and of rapture was visible to his gaze.

"You think me extravagant, Nuenar? — unbounded in my wishes — ungrateful to Heaven for what I have obtained — unworthy, perhaps, of more?"

"I think, Ghebhard, you possess much that might satisfy a reasonable man, and means, with good management, of gaining a great name. Archbishop in your church, elector of the empire, one among the princes of Europe, liege-sovereign of 300,000 souls, with a fertile territory, fine towns, and teeming villages, lord of the Rhine for much of its broadest and loveliest course, with large revenues, wide patronage, and great privileges."

"And with all, Adolphus, not mine own master; nay, nor even master of myself!"

"I know not the distinction."

"'Tis not so subtle, neither. Is not the emperor my liege?"

but that could be borne. Is not this turbulent city, this sink of bigotry and beggary, where monks and mendicants lord it with factious burghers — is it not more sovereign over me, than I over it? And *am* I master of myself? Have not wild passions always dragged me or driven me on? Hast not thou, Nuenar, from my early youth, struggled often to save me from my own excess? I know my faults, and thank Heaven I know the luxury of a friendship that lets me give free bent to thoughts which, if suppressed, would choke me."

With these words the elector took Count Nuenar's hand, and pressed it firmly between both of his. His phlegmatic friend betrayed no such emotions as beamed in Ghebhard's expressive and ever-varying countenance. Even while he forcibly returned the pressure, his regular features showed no play. His placid mouth did not tremble, nor did his eyes appear brighter or larger than before, like those of warmer temperaments, which gain lustre and fulness from excitement. Count Nuenar's mind was like a bow always ready bent: Ghebhard's as the weapon's string, which, if not at times relaxed, had surely snapped and broken from over tension. Either mind singly might effect much in its respective capacity; one in resistance, the other in action. But the little enterprise of the first might fail of desired results, without the stimulating ardour of the latter; which in its turn might overshoot the object, if left alone and unchecked by the counterpoise. But two such minds acting together for a common purpose, had every prospect of success; and that which they were now engaged on, required all their united energy and prudence. It was the introduction of the reformed doctrines into the chapter and city of Cologne, and thence throughout the whole of that electorate, of which Ghebhard was at once the spiritual and temporal chief.

This had been the great, indeed the sole object of Count Nuenar's life, even before the appointment of his friend to the high dignity he had acquired, when scarcely turned thirty years of age. Since that period, Ghebhard, whose ambition burst through the narrow ways by which it bounded to its goal, had laboured anxiously in the cause which reason and feeling alike told him was good. Independent of personal pride in his station, he felt sincerely the honour of being instrumental to the enlightenment of his kind. Yet, while he laboured to

make men what he believed they ought to be, he could not help despising them for being what they were. He was not one of those self-dubbed philanthropists who affect to call the beings lowest in the scale of humanity "brothers," yet neglect every means to make them worthy of the brotherhood; who whet the passions of the people, as mechanics sharpen their tools, wearing them out while grinding them to an edge, and *when* worn out flinging them aside among the wreck and rubbish.

Ghebhard Truchses was, in short, from birth, education, talent, reflection, and impulse, an aristocrat, as who of his station in his time — ay, or in ours — could fail to be? Conscious of superiority to the mass of his fellow men, and therefore convinced that gradations in the scale were an inevitable law of nature, he felt proudly grateful to Heaven for having made him what he was, although his impassioned temperament led him sometimes, as we have seen, to murmur and complain. But he was an aristocrat of bold, broad views, not overlooking the defects of those who stood on the same elevation with himself, while gazing on the more obvious littleness of the classes that moved below him. He would have willingly seen all men on a level as to moral rights; but the very instinct of self-preservation, as well as the exercise of reason, told him it was wiser to raise one class up than to pull the other down. He knew that the broad mass of social material might be fined gradually to a point; but that a pyramid could not maintain its balance were it to be all at once reversed.

As one of the superior men who, in those early days of European freedom, saw even vaguely through the mists of political economy, which is in ours, perhaps, degenerating into political extravagance, Ghebhard Truchses is deserving of an honourable place in history. As one of those whose virtues and faults, whose strength and whose weakness, led to adventures and vicissitudes of no ordinary interest, he merits at least the place which we would give him in its romance.

The conversation, our relation of which preceded this not unnecessary digression, was interrupted by the entrance of the kammerrath, the official functionary whose duty was to announce to his highness the service of the mid-day meal.

"Dinner! already! I had quite forgotten," exclaimed he. "Forgive me, dear Nuenar, if the pleasure of our meeting

drove from my head all other duties but that of communing with and *confessing* myself to thee."

"Thou art quite absolved, and I not a little hungry," replied the count; "but after the repast, Ghebhard, we have much, very much to talk over. Thou wilt not sit long, nor let the service linger?"

"Were it but in thy honour, Adolphus, the wine-flask must circle freely; but besides thee and Kriechlingen, I have bidden several others. Say, sir, are the dinner guests arrived?"

"Baron Conrad, the Italian count, and the Abbots of St. Kennett and St. Mary are already in the withdrawing room, waiting your highness's coming," replied the kammerrath, or chamberlain, as we may translate the title.

"Body of the saints! are they? we must bestir ourselves, Nuenar, nor keep these good folk shivering in the damp of the mould-tapestried saloons. Let Walram wait on me!" and as the chamberlain retired, the ready valet entered the cabinet; and the elector resumed at once the business of dressing and the conversation.

"Ay! methinks this violet velvet doublet goes well with the white point and spangles, and after all suits me better than the cumbrous trappings of my state. What sayest thou, Nuenar? It is Walram's own choice. Is he not a valet of infinite taste? That nod speaks approval and confirms the fiat. My ruff, now, Walram, and the Venice chain with Cellini's last-wrought medallion; I shall wear them in honour of this Italian to-day. Knowest thou, Adolphus, Count Jerome Scoti, or Scotus, or Scotin? I scarcely know which in propriety to call him, for he brings me recommendations in various languages, and from several countries."

"I have no knowledge of any such names. Those travelling counts by whom thou, Ghebhard, art so beset, rarely penetrate my solitude, even by report."

"And is it not pity, Nuenar, that a man like thee should so bury himself? one so formed to ——"

"Do better in my retreat for the great cause of moral liberty than waste myself on worldly vanities, and be the prey of each adventurer that crosses the Alps to infest our cities and gull the simple or the vain — the lowly or the great!"

There was more animation, and more of reproach, in the utterance of these words than was usual in the manner by

which Count Nuenar was wont to check the constitutional impetuosity of his friend. But the subject now started was a sore one, for he had frequently found it necessary to interpose between Ghebhard's generous credulity and the baseness by which it was abused.

Of all the princes of his standing, not one was so celebrated for all that renders even the most lofty intellects the victims of the meanest. His love of literature and the fine arts — his idolatry of talent in men, and of beauty in women — his enthusiastic sympathy with all that he admired — his total freedom from envy or malice himself, and his slowness to suspect it in others — his open hospitality, and his love of pleasure, all combined to render the archbishop-elect of Cologne the mark of the designing impostures alluded to by Nuenar.

No one, perhaps, had made so many mistaken attachments, or been so frequently deceived. The facility of his nature not only encouraged, but invited deceit. Men are oftener knaves from temptation than from temperament; and such a character as Ghebhard's generated the evils by which he suffered, warming into life by its very splendour the reptiles which made him their prey. He had been often the dupe of men bearing false names, and women with titles to which they had no right; but of the crowds who had for years thronged his all but kingly palaces at Bonn, Cologne, Poppelsdorf, or Bruhl, there were few who did not give him back envy for his noble qualities, and who, in doing him wrong, did not lay the surest foundation on which to build deep hatred. It was thus that he, who of most in his station had done the least harm and greatest quantity of good to his fellows, and had most freely shared his means, and most readily exerted his influence to promote their welfare, possessed more enemies, perhaps, than any one. But hitherto he had thoroughly despised all such. A libel or lampoon caused him not the least concern; and as for more serious attacks, he possessed a fund of energy and courage ready to meet all drafts. No one had yet borne oftener or with more genuine dignity the baffled efforts of malignity. But he had yet known no reverse. He was buoyed high above the flood of events by a firm conviction of his good destiny. He had not yet, in fact, been thoroughly tried. He had been so little blunted by disappointment, his heart was still so warm, youth still throbbed so high in his pulse, and revelled so stir-

ringly in his blood — for youth and age are merely relative terms, depending not on years but constitution — that he was as ripe as ever for a new attachment, as willing to trust, and as ready to be deceived. It was in this mood that he was now about to form the acquaintanceship of one, whose celebrity is most owing to the connexion begun that very day, but who, even independent of it, is notorious for being, in the words of an old German author, “the chief wonder-master of deceit.”

Ghebhard Truchses had in a high degree the quality of enduring advice, or even reproof, from a friend. It must be an unkindly mixture of selfishness and sensitiveness that is not gratified, rather than hurt, by any such proof of sincere regard ; and there was a genuine tone in Count Nuenar’s words that left no doubt of his sincerity. Ghebhard was, moreover, pleased at every instance of animation in one so phlegmatic, from the natural feeling that makes us flattered at seeing in another the reflection of our own merits, or even faults. He only smiled, therefore, at the covert reproach contained in Nuenar’s allusion, and said in reply, —

“As you please, Adolphus ; in as far as I am concerned, lean heavy, spare not. But for a stranger, an unknown and untried man, have mercy. This count, though he is an Italian, may be honest. His retinue is, I am told, magnificent. My letters, both from Padua and Salamanca, speak much of his learning and science, while that from Paris lauds his accomplishments and his honour to the highest pitch of praise. Now let’s to table ; we will give fair trial ere we condemn ——”

“Or be too credulous.”

“Nuenar, Nuenar, thou art of too cautious a kidney, an infidel as to mankind, a very Hussite in unbelief. Didst thou know English, I would quote thee a verse or two, worthy to keep thee in the true faith thou owest thy fellows.”

“Recite, recite, and then translate,” replied Nuenar, smiling in his turn, as the elector took him under the arm and led him from the cabinet.

“Here then is the couplet : —

“Leave reasons : believe ; wonder ;
Believe hath masterye, reasons is under,”

repeated Ghebhard, laughing, as they walked on through a long file of officers and other attendants, lay and clerical ; and, just

as they reached the grand saloon or withdrawing room, completing the translation of the English doggerel into German prose.

CHAPTER IV.

THE household of the elector formed in themselves a large party. There were chaplain, and almoner, and lecturer, with several other spiritual consumers of worldly things, mixed with chamberlain, equerry, grand-master, and groom, and a long list of temporal aspirants for the grace of Heaven. All these, with a dozen or more visitors, the usual number on common and quiet days, like the one in question, completed a table of about thirty covers. The grand dinners often brought together double that number at the board. But whether the company was great or small, promiscuous or select, everything was in the truest keeping of splendid entertainment.

The elector, accompanied by Count Nucnar, entered the saloon, where his officers of state had previously received the guests; and, advancing to the circle, he addressed to each some phrase of frank yet dignified civility. To the Italian count, as of highest rank, and a stranger, he paid most marked attention, and gave the most particular welcome.

This personage was no other than he whose splendid equipage had excited so much attention that morning, as it brought up the tail of the procession. He was of tall stature, slight, and well proportioned; his complexion was different from the generality of his countrymen, and his light brown mustachios and beard were trimmed, curled, and scented in a manner that proclaimed much care, and was correspondent with his whole personal appearance. His dress was of rich velvet, glittering with embroidery, spangles, and filigree buttons, yet made in a fashion of such good taste that nothing appeared overloaded or gaudy; several jewels were evident in various parts of his apparel, or as ornamenting the three or four crosses and stars of different orders, which hung on his breast; and suspended round his neck in a triple coil was a massive gold chain, "every link of which was a thumb's-breadth wide, and a thumb and

a half long," as is recorded by a German chronicler, and proved by the portrait painted on wood, and presented by the notorious original himself to the city of Dantzic (in the state library of which it is placed), and bearing this modest inscription, "*Effig. Hieronimi Scotii Placent.*" On this authority and some others, we state that the individual in question was not of a prepossessing countenance. His long face, pointed chin, thin lips, low, flat forehead, and piercing blue eyes bespoke a depth of serious cunning and ignoble prudence that was strongly contrasted with the calm, grave beauty of Count Nuenar, and the still nobler but less regular expression of the elector's broad and prominent front and features, which, taken separately, were in no way remarkable, but in their combined effect highly so. In every other respect the stranger proved himself suited to the level of his host; and he walked first to the dining-hall, through corridors lined with the living pageantry of state, and took his seat at table, on the elector's right hand, with the easy good breeding of one accustomed to the place of honour.

The rest of the company showed no person of any interest in our story beyond those mentioned, and young Ulrick of Leckenstein, whose modesty prevented his mentioning his engagement for the elector's dinner, during the conversation in the balcony, lest the ladies he spoke with might have suspected him of vanity, which was, after all, and quite unknown to him, his leading foible. There was one at table with him, who soon found it out, and turned it to account, as we shall see in the sequel.

The early part of the repast went over in the common-place way usual to dinners in all ages, appetite being first attended to and satisfied before conversation or real conviviality commences its full flow. But at the table of Ghebhard Truchses, the social delights of feasting were never long kept back by grosser considerations. It was there he reigned eminently conspicuous for all that was most pleasing in hospitality, good-fellowship, and talent. But his efforts on those occasions were more exerted to give scope for the capabilities of others, than to display his own. He always exercised this faculty with rare tact, and never more successfully than on the present occasion.

The Italian readily fell in with the humour of his host;

and in reply to his observations concerning Paris, Padua, and Salamanca (in the several universities of which Ghebbard Truchses had pursued his early studies with great honour), he entered on a fund of anecdote and descriptions that seemed inexhaustible. Nor did he merely speak of things as they then were, or in relation to changes which had taken place since the elector had walked the various halls in his student's cap and gown; but he ran fluently back upon the traces of time, spoke on matters of remotest history, and brought forward scenes and personages of centuries gone by, with a graphic power that at once delighted and amazed his listeners.

He very soon engrossed the attention of the whole company, for every one present was more or less interested in the variety of topics he touched on, embracing almost everything in the range of then known science or art. The elector was enraptured in delight; even Nuenar was won over from his predisposition in the stranger's disfavour, and he listened, admired, and wondered like the rest.

"In sooth, count, you do with infinite power raise up the images of buried things. A wizard's skill could scarce do more," said the elector, as a short pause occurred after one of the stranger's spoken sketches, only broken by murmurs of applause from all parts of the table. "And my old master of rhetoric, the venerable Joachim Montoni—how you bring him again before me! He is now a most aged man?"

"Not so old, neither," replied Scotus, as we shall call the Italian, choosing the termination of the dead, in preference to that of the living language of his country, as most of the writers by whom he is mentioned have done, following the Latin biographer of Ghebbard Truchses.*

"Not old!" exclaimed the elector. "Why when I sat in his class at Padua, he numbered at least three score and ten! and it is now—how many? Eighteen, ay nineteen years since then! Is not that an aged man?"

"Comparatively, yes," answered Scotus, carelessly, but with a look of so strange a meaning as made all near him stare, first at him, and then at each other. But the Italian's look was unexplained and not commented on at the moment.

* De actis et fas Gebhardi Truchsesil. Davide Koelero. Altorf, 1615.

"Your highness might, perchance, like to see the professor's handwriting when he was a younger man than even when you listened to his lectures?" said Scotus, drawing from his doublet a most antique-looking parchment-covered book of small dimensions, fastened with brazen clasps of curious workmanship.

"I should be glad of any memento of a man I loved so well," replied the elector, "and particularly of characters traced by his own hand, the letter you were the bearer of being written by that of his secretary. This seems a rare volume of manuscript. Its shrivelled leaves have the true stains of antiquity: it is as old, methinks, as Joachim Montini's self."

"If your highness were to examine it a little, you might believe it to be older."

"Ah, here is the professor's signature indeed, and the date 1527, more than fifty years back. This seems to be a curious collection of autographs," remarked the elector, turning over the leaves.

"Yes, I love to gather these contributions from memorable men."

"Gather their contributions!" said Truchses. "*Gather* them! Why here is Raphael's; here Dante's; here Ariosto's name! If *gathered*, it must have been in the grave!"

"It is easier to outlive one's friends than to give new life to the dead!" said Scotus, with a solemnity of tone so strongly contrasted with his previous animation that the whole company felt a thrill of awe, in unison with the almost supernatural meaning implied in the expression.

"Outlive one's friends!—And what are we to infer from that, count?" said the elector smiling as he observed the half awe-struck looks of his guests; but he could not see his own.

"Whatever may seem most pleasing to your highness," replied the Italian, with an air of resignation and modesty that seemed mixed with sorrow.

"The great Raphael died full half a century ago; you are not quite so old, methinks, count?" said Nuenar, with a sarcastic smile.

"I am glad you find me worthy of a thought, sir," said the Italian.

"And the immortal Dante closed his life in thirteen hun-

dred and thirty-one, two centuries and a half ago," observed one of the abbots who sat on Scotus's right hand.

"In thirteen hundred and *twenty-one*, reverend father," rejoined the latter, "and was born in twelve hundred and sixty-five. He who followed the hearse of the man, and has rocked the cradle of the child, may be accurate as to dates of him he loved and honoured."

The Italian checked himself here, sighed, and passed his hand across his brow. No one replied ; no one could, no one in fact dared trust himself to speak.

At this moment a servant announced to the Italian that his secretary waited without, with letters just arrived by the post. Scotus, with an air of much good breeding, requested permission of the elector to retire, for the purpose of their perusal. The latter insisted on his receiving, and if he chose it, reading them at table. The secretary was accordingly introduced, and he put several missives into his master's hand. The latter placed them loosely before him on the table, selecting one, which he begged leave to open ; and as the elector inclined his head, in persuasion rather than assent, he could not help being struck with the address —

"TO NOBODY,"

which was written in large characters on the back of the letter. His excited curiosity made him look at the others. One was directed in characters which appeared to be Chinese ; another bore the word "Cologne," and no more. The rest were covered so as to defy casual scrutiny ; but these which were visible had all the usual marks of the post regulations distinctly and legibly stamped.

"Does your highness know that handwriting?" asked Scotus, as he carelessly broke the seal of another, and showed a close written epistle to the elector.

"It should be that of his majesty Philip II. of Spain, if I err not," was the reply.

"Your highness is right," said Scotus, showing the signature of the despot, which Ghebbard was well acquainted with.

"And this?" continued he, tearing away the heavy seal from another, and pointing to the name at foot.

"That is Elizabeth's of England!" exclaimed the astonished elector.

"Even so," said Scotus. He then placed his letters within the breast of his doublet, having hastily glanced at their contents, dismissed his secretary, who walked carelessly round the table, and left the room at the side opposite to his master.

What were the impressions made, or intended to be made by all this? That the stranger, a man of evidently prodigious knowledge and a high order of talent, was in familiar correspondence with the most powerful sovereigns existing, had been the friend and associate of some of the most celebrated geniuses, of present and past times, and moreover, that he was at least three hundred years old!

That he succeeded to a great extent is certain. On some points there could be no doubt; of others there was strong presumption. Every one present believed much of what they heard, and several were willing to credit all that was implied. It was still a most credulous age. When we throw back our mind's vision on the facts of history and the failings of mankind, and fix it on an epoch so comparatively near our own; when we reflect on the advances made by science and the arts, even before those days, on the great political events and the vast combinations of mental power in action at the very time, and on the marvellous similarity of men and measures then and now, we are lost in wonder, that the human intellect could, on some points, have been so profoundly dark, or so copiously saturated with almost incredible superstitions.

Among other still common shadows of belief, for they had never been embodied into the solid absurdity of "Articles," was "the grand magistrery," as it was pompously called, "the philosopher's stone," another of its vague mystifying titles, or the power of converting base metals into gold, and that of compounding the elixir of eternal life. A powerful writer of our own days * has portrayed the miseries of this grand secret, in a way sufficient to deter the most ambitious of those who laugh at it as chimerical. But even such a writer, two or three centuries back, would have failed to frighten the great mass of believers who followed, or were haunted by, the phantom. We want nothing more to impress us with contempt for our kind than the crowds who are at all times ready to live and die for the current superstitions of their day. There was scarce one man at the table of Ghebhard Truchses,

* Godwin.

on that in question, who was not disposed rather to credit than to scout the monstrous prodigy of which Jerome Scotus was anxious to be considered the illustration. Even the elector himself, elevated as he was in talent, and distinguished for his acquirements, was not quite proof against the prevalent influence. He saw that his new-made acquaintance was, at any rate, a man of more than common capabilities; and mixed with his cordial admiration of talent was that strange and latent waywardness, not uncommon to enthusiastic minds, a willingness to be deceived.

But, however Ghebhard Truchses and his friends might have been disposed, or acted on, we will not attempt to play on our readers by any artifice. We at once denounce Jerome Scotus and his doings for what they were; him for a vile adventurer, and them a well-woven tissue of cheater. Readers of our days, or at least those for whom we would write, have no sympathy for, and find no charms in, events or characters wrapped in a veil of magical delusions. If our heroes or heroines have been too credulous, we neither expect nor wish our readers to be so too. In striving to give them amusement, and perhaps information, we would not treat them as dupes. We shall, therefore, detail events, without endeavouring to torture them into mysteries.

At the period of our tale, and for some time previous, France and the more northern parts of Europe were overrun by Italian intriguers and impostors, introduced into Paris under the patronage of Catherine de Medicis, and thence spread abroad in all directions. The cleverness of these adventurers was proverbial. There were few of them who were not proficient in all the juggleries of legerdemain, who could not cast nativities, and make an imposing show of knowledge in judicial astrology and alchymy. The most highly accomplished of such persons in all those illusory arts was Jerome Scotus. He soon made for himself a base notoriety; and his most eminent victims, in Germany at least, counted among them names in which we hope our readers even already feel some interest.

The first individual of note, on whom he ventured openly to practise his arts, was Ghebhard Truchses. He had made himself master of the character, tastes and habits of the elector. He had procured some real, and forged other letters

of recommendation for his intended dupe. For he had acquired acquaintanceships with some eminent persons, by means of his learning, talents, and impudence ; and there were few of any celebrity whose handwriting he had not seen, and could not imitate. He was aware of the elector's predilection for all that was sumptuous ; and the equipage and train with which he appeared at Cologne was such as would have done honour to a sovereign prince. He had arrived there the evening before the procession, and had taken up his lodging in the house of the burgomaster, Johann Hilpaert, one of the wealthiest merchants in the city, and to whom he was recommended in the highest terms, by individuals of great worth in Hamburg, from which place he stated himself to have come in a direct line.

Now this Hilpaert was the most bitter, and withal the most powerful, enemy of the elector-archbishop, and the leading agent of the town council, in all the intrigues fomented by Ernest of Bavaria, Bishop of Liege, who, "nothing loth," was urged on, by both high and low supporters, as a candidate for the dignity enjoyed by Ghebhard Truchses.

The latter had, in his turn, counter-agents in the city, by whom, and through the medium of his household officers, he was speedily informed of the movements of his opponents. At the important crisis of the congress, when some of the williest diplomatists of Europe were assembled, when the intrigues of all Germany, Spain, and the Low Countries were in active operation, and when every one concerned knew himself to move in a maze of trick and treachery, it behoved all, and none more than Ghebhard Truchses, to be on his guard, and to counteract, by every fair means at least — and what a wide latitude does diplomacy give to the term ! — the chicanery which spread its tangled meshes abroad. It is not, then, to be wondered at that the elector had immediate information of the arrival of so apparently important a personage, and so large a retinue as clattered up to the gate of Hilpaert's residence ; nor that he, in acknowledgment of the honourable recommendations sent to his palace almost immediately by their bearer, had despatched an instant invitation for the dinner on the following day, at which we have taken the opportunity of bringing the stranger to our readers' notice.

Nor will it, we trust, be thought derogatory to the high

feeling of our hero, for such is Ghebbard Truchses, if we acknowledge that, independent of his prompt sentiment of hospitality, there was a less quick but as sure an instinct at work, telling him to use his natural right of reducing the ranks of his enemies and recruiting his own, by every advantageous and honourable alliance. Who or what Count Jerome Scotus was he knew not quite, from the general vague tone of the letters he brought. But as some of them bore the signatures of functionaries of the courts of France and Spain, he had no doubt of his importance. Of the Italian's objects in appearing at Cologne at this critical moment he could have no fixed opinion ; but he little doubted that they were in some way connected with the proceedings of the Congress, although he was no ostensible member of it. Political curiosity thus aided the operations of the other motives which led to the elector's ready attentions ; and the impression made on him by his guest was such as to decide him to push them to the very limits of prudent hospitality.

Jerome Scotus having, by the tricks of conversation, by innuendo and pause and emphasis, grafted on the stock of a ready wit and boundless information, wound up his listeners to whatever pitch he chose, soon proceeded to convince them that he was not a mere pretender — that he could do as well as talk.

His first trick of legerdemain was practised on the good and bold Baron Conrad Von Kriechlingen, who sat opposite to him, leaning on both elbows, staring with all his eyes, twisting his long grizzled mustachios, and moving the lower jaw and firm-closed lips with that species of action which in cattle is called chewing the cud. Scotus wore several rings, and, among others, one garnished the thumb of his left hand, a brilliant of remarkable size, so much so, that the elector, becoming more familiar as the flasks of Rhein wine were quickly emptied and rapidly replaced by full ones, asked permission of his guest to examine it more closely. When he got it into his hands, he found that, however fine the stone, the setting was of corresponding merit.

" This must be Cellini's work ? " said he ; " none but the wayward head of Benvenuto's self could have imagined, and no fingers less expert than his could have wrought such a curious and exquisitely carved device."

"It has ever been my pride to encourage rising genius, and to bear its records about me," observed Scotus, examining in his turn the elector's chain and medallion, the workmanship of the master-hand just named; while the ring was passed round the table from one admiring guest to another.

The somewhat inquisitive and not very clear-headed abbot of St. Kennett's, the Italian's right hand neighbour, unsatisfied, it would seem, by what had already taken place relative to Raphael and Dante, was resolved to try Scotus's meaning by the test of another chronological remark.

"You talk, count, of *rising* genius," observed he; "now, if my memory does not fail me, your celebrated countryman, Cellini, was born in 1500, and died in 1570; consequently, to have given encouragement to his early efforts you must have patronised him full forty years ago; and methinks that is at least ten years more than your baptism certificate would count for?"

"Reverend abbot, the hoop in which that brilliant is set was chased by Benvenuto's apprentice hand."

"And yet made to your order, count?"

No answer was given to this direct question. The whole company looked grave again. But the elector was resolved not to let any heavy cloud rest long over his board. He saw into the object of his guest as clearly as our readers do by this time; and he individually felt quite indifferent whether Count Jerome was believed to be a man of thirty, or as old as Methuselah.

"Well, Kriechlingen, is not that a rare gem?" said he, as Baron Conrad eyed the ring, and turned it in his hand with great attention.

"In truth it is, your highness," replied the baron; "and the chased setting worthy of the diamond. It is long since I have seen its like."

"And where, or when, noble sir, have you ever happened to see its like?" asked the Italian, with a look so keen as to put the worthy baron in some degree out of countenance.

"Nay, I said not I had ever actually seen a gem decidedly the same; but yet it seems to me that I once was struck with nearly, if not quite such a one, on the forefinger of the great

Maurice of Saxony, brother of the present elector, and uncle of the Duchess Anne of Saxe-Coburg."

"Indeed!" said Scotus, with a sneering tone; "and are you, noble baron, quite sure that the elector's ring did not pass into your own possession?"

"Into my possession! I do not understand you, count. What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Scotus, with that provokingly cool air which blows the temper of an irritable man into absolute flame.

"Nothing! what, is it nothing to accuse me? ——"

"Hold, hold, Von Kriechlingen!" exclaimed the elector, with the tone of friendly authority irresistible to his choleric guest — "no accusation could be ventured, no offence meant, to your honour in my presence and at my table—you are too hasty."

"I hope I am, your highness; but still, under your favour, this insinuation must be explained."

"Patience, patience, baron, it may explain itself," calmly observed Scotus; while the ring, having made its round, reached the abbot of St. Kennett's by his side, the pious churchman being at the moment occupied in an interchange of sarcastic winking and nodding of the head with his brother the abbot of St. Mary's, both not a little tickled at the evident annoyance of Kriechlingen, whom they devoutly hated, as the head of the heretic party in the chapter.

"Verily this is a trinket of worth; and well might it be for the soul of the Elector Maurice had he offered its likeness to the shrine of some holy saint, instead of wearing it, in the vanity of his heart, which knew little of the honour due to mother church," said the clumsy abbot, taking this roundabout way of adding to the baron's vexation, and turning towards his more silent brother for applause, while at the same time he laid the ring on the table, close beside Scotus.

"Holy father abbot," said the latter, gravely, "whatever may have been the inclinations of the great Maurice, mine do not urge me to deck St. Kennett's altar with my thumb-ring brilliant, to expiate either the elector's errors or my own. Therefore, in all humility, I crave your reverence to restore to me the trinket."

"What! me! restore it!" exclaimed the priest, bustling and fidgeting on his chair, and looking among the glasses on the table, and in the folds of his robe, with great agitation; "may the blessed eleven thousand be my guard! but I placed the gem here, beside you, count, not an instant gone."

"So!" said Scotus, with the strongest emphasis possible to be laid on that favourite and ambiguous German interjection—"Yet it is not there now."

"Holy St. Kennett! It is not indeed!" cried the abbot, his face reddening to a most fiery tinge.

"His reverence's countenance, stuck up in the shrine of his saint, might rival the great ruby in the crown of King Melchior, and serve a good turn to Elector Maurice in purgatory," said Kriechlingen, across the table, to Nuenar, who, with more prudence, made no reply to the irreverent sally; not the less enjoying the abbot's confusion, and his more suspicious temper going even farther than the baron's sarcasm to the churchman's disfavour.

"Why, how is this mistake? Let the ring be found!" said the elector, turning to the attendants, with a look of severe authority; "there is surely no rogue, nor yet any juggler in the room?"

"Not so unlikely—and two fat abbots at the board!" murmured Kriechlingen, laughing at length outright at the now boisterous protestations of the churchman, that he knew nothing of the fate of the missing ring.

"Heed it not, heed it not, good father," said Scotus, "it is not worthy of a thought, and scarcely of being worn by a mortal sinner like me, much less by the effigy of the blessed St. Kennett."

"Not worthy! mother of man! It is a jewel of price, and if found again—I warrant me the holy saint will think well of accepting it for an offering—if such be the meaning of your words."

A renewed burst of laughter from Kriechlingen was the only answer to this suggestion.

"I esteem the bauble as nought, reverend abbot," said Scotus—"it will no doubt be found—but in the mean time, perhaps, the worthy baron yonder will let us look on its similitude, which was once the pride of the elector of Saxony, as he tells us?"

"What! do you again utter this insinuation?" exclaimed old Conrad, no longer restraining his ire. "Do you mean to charge me with"——

"Pray, baron, keep cool, and put your hand into the left side pocket of your *haut-de-chausses*," resumed Scotus, with great calmness.

"Put my hand in my pocket! what would you mean by that? By Heavens!"——cried the angry baron, at the same moment instinctively thrusting his hand into the ample pouch of his wide-slashed nether garments—as a man is sure to touch his chin if another talks of shaving.

"Eh? What the fiend! The holy martyrs preserve me! What is this?" were the next rapid exclamations of the almost bewildered baron, as he pulled out of its hiding-place, and held up to view a ring, which seemed identical with the article that had caused so much confusion. When he recovered himself a little, and the expression of surprise which burst from the company had subsided, he continued, "This is witchcraft—this is not fair play! By the oath and honour of a soldier, I know not what to make of it! Abbot of St. Kennett's, you have played me a spiteful trick! Count Scotus, what is this? Take back your accursed ring, and free me from a spell—for such must hang over me."

The abbot shrunk aside and crossed himself, as Kriechlingen flung the ring across the table. Scotus caught it as it rolled towards him, and turning to the elector, said,—

"May it please your highness to permit a hammer to be brought me; I will relieve the conscience of the soldier and the alarm of the priest."

A sign from the elector sufficed for one of the attendants to leave the room, and to return immediately with the required instrument, which he placed in the Italian's hands. The latter had, in the mean time, touched a spring, which forced the diamond from its setting. He placed the glittering gem on his napkin; and before the elector could interfere to prevent the blow, he reduced it to dust by one heavy stroke.

A volley of exclamations of surprise and regret burst from all sides, but none were so loud, or had their source so deep, as those of the Abbot of St. Kennett's.

"Holy saints! what a pity! A jewel worth a thousand *moutons d'or* if it was worth one! Oh, count, count, why did

you not rather give it to me for the shrine of my blessed patron, than do this—almost sacrilegious deed—this almost heathenish sacrifice? Jesu Maria! a thousand pieces of gold lost to our abbey for ever!—that is, as I would say, a precious ornament of that value at least, lost to the statue of the saint. The hand of Satan is in this; for how else did the bauble find its way to the baron's breeches pocket? But why do I ask? the evil one and his imps know where to nestle!"

To prevent a retort, which Kriechlingen was preparing—having been set greatly at his ease by the demolition of what he considered the enchanted jewel—and to give the finishing stroke to the wonderment he had already excited, Scotus, with the same calm tone he had observed throughout, begged the abbot to be consoled, for that perhaps the gem was not inevitably destroyed.

"How not destroyed?" exclaimed the dissatisfied priest. "Did I not see the precious stone reduced to powder? Is not its respected dust covered by that napkin, like a winding-sheet over a corpse? Ah, 'twas a wanton robbery of the church! You have not done well in this, Count Scotus! You have not done well in this!"

"Faith may work a miracle, reverend father."

"Faith may work a fiddlestick! The saints forgive me; but I am sore vexed at this foolish trick."

"Come, father, be of better cheer. Blow a breath on this twisted napkin," said Scotus, holding up his own close to the abbot's face.

"What does this mean? Take it away, take it away! I cannot, with patience, see a man play the fool with his own fortune, and make light of the saint's loss—a miracle indeed!"

"Nay, blow one breath, holy sir!"

"There, then, there; and Heaven forgive your extravagant mummery, and send you more sense than you seem to want money!" said the abbot, disinclined to refuse any request of his now very questionable neighbour, and giving a hoarse puff on the napkin, with all the force of his lungs. At the same moment Scotus turned it inside out, by a dexterous twist and a quick shake, and lo! the wonderful ring appeared in all its brilliancy, shining in primitive innocence, as though magic had never worked wonders upon it.

An electric thrill ran through the witnesses of this feat.

Old Kriechlingen jumped from his seat. The abbot of St. Kennett's fairly started up, and quitted the table abruptly, calling loudly on his patron to grant him protection from the snares of the evil one, who must, he declared, be abroad. Scotus quietly put his ring on his thumb, shook his napkin with an indifferent air, and answered some expressions of applause at his dexterity, on the part of the elector, by an assurance that it was but child's play in comparison with what he had the gift of performing.

And this was true. The art of sleight-of-hand, by which this clever conjurer had concealed his really valuable ring, and made it reappear whole and sound when his trick was completed, was but a trifling specimen of his skill, and has been a thousand times surpassed since his days. But it was first-rate jugglery then. The reader will have divined that the accomplice secretary slipped the counterpart ring into the baron's breeches pocket, when he was leaving the room after the delivery of the letters to his roguish master, and that this counterpart was also a counterfeit, Scotus possessing the secret of making false diamonds of paste, a secret practised with great effect a century later than his time, by the notorious Marquis St. Germain, who sported with many a credulous dupe, pretty much in the manner of his great original, and who has had in his turn numerous imitators, up to the impostors of our own days.

"And will not your reverence accept this poor offering for the shrine?" said Scotus, advancing towards the abbot in mock humility, and holding forth the ring.

"Offer me no offering! Avaunt! *Apaga Sathanas!*" exclaimed the half-terrified priest, spitting on the ground—a pious, but rather ill-bred species of practical exorcism—and retreating towards the door, which had been already gained by the abbot of St. Mary's. "The Virgin forbid that our sacred shrine should be polluted by the devil's handiwork! No, no! Sooner would I strip the sacred statue stark naked, and throw its consecrated treasures into the Rhine, than lay a finger on that unholy thing! *Sancta Maria, ora pro me!*"

"Reverend brothers in grace, you do not quit me so soon? Ye will not break up our party for this harmless trait of hand-trickery?" said the elector, following the retreating eccle-

siastics, with a smile, which he could not suppress, yet meant no offence by.

"Not quit your highness, when enchantment wraps you round! not break away from a party in which Beelzebub is the chief guest! Ah! woe is the day, with due respect to your highness's station, I say it, when magic and sorcery find a patron in the archbishop's palace, and heresy is mixed up with devilry at the table of our spiritual Lord!

*Nulla salus est in domo,
Nisi cruce munit homo!*

"Alas, and alack for the true faith, when cope, crosier, mitre, and dalmatica, are flung aside for temporal trappings—when spells and charms and heathenish signs are fostered in the house which should be holy! Come, brother, come! We pray your highness's excuse—and when we betake us to our exorcisms by and by, I promise your highness that the sprinkling of the holy water and the prayers for grace shall not be unmixed with beseechings to our blessed patron that your highness may be snatched from your too manifest delusions, for the glory of mother church, and the saving of your own soul."

With the utterance of this tirade, the abbot of St. Kennett and his brother-priest hurried away, crossing themselves and jostling the irreverend attendants, and repeating aloud fragments of the saints' litany and counter-spells against magic, until they fairly cleared the porch of the archiepiscopal palace.

The half-heretic elector threw up his hands as the churchmen quitted the room, as if in the action of giving them his blessing, but with a shake of the head which spoke the mockery that prompted the movement. A burst of laughter from all present was the accompaniment. Kriechlingen, and Nuenar even, could not resist that unseemly explosion of disrespect to the representatives of the priestcraft whose authority they had renounced; while the reverend individuals of the household, though for the most part catholics, relieved of the presence of those spiritual drawbacks to mirth, joined in the loud chorus which they knew well would in no way be discordant to their host, in either his temporal or spiritual capacity.

The places at table were quickly resumed. The depths of the elector's cellar poured forth their choicest samples. The revelry went on. Conrad of Kriechlingen was soon reconciled

to the trick he had been the subject of, though still sorely puzzled by fruitless attempts to fathom it. Count Nuenar forgot his anxiety for private converse with Ghebhard Truchses. Young Leckenstein was false to an appointed visit to his fair cousin and beloved mistress. Von Heyen neglected the duty of parade. The whole company, in short, were spell-bound under the influence of Jerome Scotus; who, encouraged by the elector, and urged by the rest, continued till night had nearly set in to astonish and delight the whole party, by feats of skill and proofs of talent, as varied as they were wonderful.

CHAPTER V.

It may be well, in reference to the powers and practices of our conjurer, and to the effects which they produced on the destiny of our hero, to sketch briefly the state of feeling which then prevailed on the subject of magic and its various accessories, and to trace the nature of its influence on such a mind as that of Ghebhard Truchses.

In earlier ages than that which forms the epoch of our tale necromancy and the arts of the cabalist were considered as philosophical pursuits, rather than as deeds of demonology. Theurgy, so often confounded with these, is in its proper signification the power of doing supernatural things by lawful means, such as prayer to heaven, acts of penance, and devotional exercises; and the study of the occult sciences, as implied in that term, was far from being considered infamous. Their most celebrated professors were, on the contrary, men of piety, the cell of the monk being most often the astrologer's studio, or the alchymist's den.

It was not till religious differences opened men's minds, while they hardened their hearts, that keen distinctions began to be made between what was lawful in science and what was not; that the useful arts were separated from the unholy; and that men agreed on what should be objects of veneration and what of odium.

The intense avidity with which those studies were followed by the Jews—that race marked out for reprobation by mon-

strous prejudices, which are even yet by no means extinct—seems the first cause which excited the church against them. As long as magic was exclusively the pursuit of the priesthood, Christianity found nothing in it repugnant to the true faith; but when the Hebrew sage turned his deep scrutiny into the fathomless depths, then were its professors denounced as degraded beings, who bought their knowledge at the price of their own damnation.

Yet, even then, it was not attempted to deny the reality of the science. The priests, in abandoning it to other professors, took care to encourage the popular belief in its genuineness; but merely to make it and its followers objects of abhorrence, and to give themselves the credit of a counteracting power, more mighty than that which they renounced.

It was thus, in the progress of deception, that exorcisms, incantations, and counter-charms, came into vogue. The church, instead of endeavouring to enlighten the world, drew an additional blind before the beam that was beginning to pierce through. She long hesitated to call in the power of legal statutes or common penalties, to crush the romantic superstitions, which she preferred to combat by those which are called religious. And, therefore, the orthodox world was only balanced between two equally absurd and baneful attractions; and the human mind was pressed down by a double weight.

When, however, the Reformation burst broadly on the benighted nations, the monstrous monopoly of Rome took the alarm; and bull after bull was launched forth, by successive pontiffs, with the avowed object of combining sorcery and heresy in a common anathema. Terrific persecutions took place on the continent, against those joint abominations. Both became equally abhorrent to the good and bigoted Catholic, who considered the man that disbelieved in transubstantiation, or ate flesh on a Friday, as on a level of infamy with him who was supposed to have fiends and demons at his back, and to have sold himself to the devil for the knowledge of the black art.

The two great sects of Reformers in the sixteenth century took diametrically different views of the question of magic, as indeed of most others. The Calvinists looked with scornful rage upon the venal quackery of the mother church, and

considered her exorcisms, and other rites, to the full as idolatrous as the arts they were directed against were admitted to be damnable. The Lutherans, on the contrary, including the leading divines of the Anglican church, treated as absolute impostures those pretended magical powers, which the mother church affected to admit, that she might turn her protection against them to profit; and which the Calvinists fostered the belief in, for the ferocious delight of putting them down by persecution.

It was thus that the juggleries of Jerome Scotus, displayed before the reforming elector, Ghebbard, and his Lutheran friends, and the nominal Catholics whose opinions were so influenced by his, were considered rather in the light of venial tricks than serious crimes. And if some awful misgivings arose at times, as to his mysterious skill, his apparently enormous wealth, or his implied pretension to uncommon and unnatural age, each man who felt such — and there was scarce one who was entirely free from them — strove to shake it off, and to combat the doubts which he despised.

The one exception to this state of feeling was Count Nuenar. His stern, dry, and unromantic mind was quite proof against the delusions of magic. It was like a rock, through which no stream of sentiment or fancy ever trickled. High principle was its only impulse, and it repelled every weakness, no matter what their source. Nuenar believed this to be the realisation of true mental greatness. But he was wrong; for the coldest temperaments have their delusions as well as the warmest. He quite mistook the standard of mortal perfection, which, if there be such at all, admits of no extremes. A statue is not more human than a shadow. Some hands feel rather like warmed marble than like glowing flesh. And the brain that is never obscured by the vapours of fancy, can never be refreshed by the dews into which they dissolve. These are unconnected and broken images. If put together they may give some notion of the character of Count Nuenar.

We would not willingly tire our readers by this kind of moral anatomy. It is better to let our personages develop their minds in action. But analysis and definition are indispensable in the most dramatic narrative. On the stage, their place is supplied by actual personification; and in

writing for that arena, the great skill consists in what to leave unsaid. In such as this, it is to say what is necessary, in its proper place. Ambitious of that aim, without presuming to hope that we take it exactly, we may add a few words more as to our hero in contrast with his friend.

Weaknesses of various kinds seem inseparable from minds of great energy. We need not ransack history for examples — they rise up at every step on the path of life — nor drag in metaphysical theories to embarrass what baffles research. We sometimes, it is true, meet men who are more like graven images of man ; beings whose clay seems to have been kneaded with some indurating essence, that hardens them against the susceptibilities of humanity. Individuals of that stamp may display power, they never reach to greatness. But it has been already acknowledged that our hero had more than one weakness ; and, if he had not, he had never been a hero of ours.

Ghebhard Truchses was a believer in destiny. A man who was firmly persuaded that he had started in life under the influence of a favourable omen, might easily be led to believe — or to wish to believe — in good or evil stars, and to give credit to the pretenders who boasted a knowledge of their mysteries. It was, in truth, this vague and undefinable desire to trust to supernatural agencies that acted on Ghebhard Truchses, rather than direct and positive belief. His proud and ambitious spirit, acknowledging the humiliations of mere mortality, longed to feel itself in the care of some occult guardianship, even at the risk of being made its sport. He was not satisfied with the superintendence of a providence that watched over all alike. He had benevolence enough to wish that all men were his fellows, ay, and to labour for their improvement ; but, conscious of his comparative advantages, he instinctively encouraged the hope that superior minds were under separate influences — and this was the extent of his superstition.

A man so cunning as Scotus could not fail to discover the true nature of this weakness, even had he not been previously acquainted with its existence. But aware of it as he was, and resolved to work on it for his own designs, he managed with great tact the introduction of the subject it hinged on. He contrived to let astrology slip in, as it were, to the general

discourse in which he took the lead; and when the elector caught the bait, and urged the subject with his usual impetuosity, the wily Italian replied casually and coldly, turning into other topics, when he had just said enough to keep that predominant in his mind.

Between the several acts of sleight-of-hand with which Scotus astonished the company after the departure of the abbots, he skilfully introduced anecdotes illustrative of the secrets of alchymy and other arts, which, like legerdemain, he seemed to have at his fingers' ends. The writers on the hermetic philosophy were the familiars he called up to aid his enchantments. Tremegistus the Egyptian; Geber the Arab; Raymond Lully the multiplier; Villanova, Gustenhover, and a hundred others, were made to dance before his auditors in the vapoury maze of their own imaginings, until at length every one present, more or less, believed himself convinced of something — he knew not exactly what — as dreamers continue to be, even after their visions are dissolved.

"Well, count, that fact is explained with truly marvellous skill," said the Baron Von Kriechlingen, hiccupping the while, as he swallowed a bumper from his capacious, thick-shanked, and embossed green glass — "Marvellous! There can be small doubt, methinks, but that that same preparation of double mercury, which you so clearly prove to have been the invention of the learned Drivilan —"

"Trevisan, uncle;" said young Leckenstein, who had caught up carefully every word that dropped from Scotus, by whose side he had for a long time been sitting.

"Well, boy, with all my heart, Trevisan or Drevizan, it's all the same, isn't it? Isn't it, count, I appeal to you — isn't it all the same?"

"To you, baron, certainly," said Scotus.

"Exactly — and I am only giving my own opinion, which quite agrees with that great alchymist Drevizan, as to the effect of this double preparation of scammony" —

"A preparation of double mercury," whispered Leckenstein.

"Ulrick, don't interrupt me, I say!" exclaimed old Conrad. "Am I, your mother's brother, to be whipped up in this — hiccup! way — by a snappish boy of a — hiccup! nephew? By the beard of St. Boniface, I'll not bear it! and as I was

saying, Count—as I was saying,—as—Ulrick, boy, what was I saying? Tell me now, out of all your college reading, you idle dog, what is the best stuff to make the real projecting powder—the *lapis Philosophorum*? can you tell me that, eh?”

“Drink, brave Conrad, drink and be wise! Fill, all a bumper to the honour of the great Trevisan!” exclaimed the elector, enjoying highly the fuddled state of the baron’s ideas, and cheering him and his companions on, to the running down of their own intellects, as a huntsman tantivies his hounds.

“But your double mercury, and your great Trevisan, have not stood the test, methinks? If I have heard aright the opinion of his highness just now, the mixture of mercury with gold, of Basil Valentine, has the rather obtained his noble suffrage,” profoundly observed a pursy, drowsy, old toad-eater, one of the chapter, who always supported the opinion of the man at whose table he fed, but whose name has not been handed down to posterity.

“I differ—hiccup! flatly with that”—said old Kriechlingen, who was one of those independent spirits that invariably oppose the last speaker, particularly when wine inflamed his pertinacity; and he had now undoubtedly entered into a new labyrinth of explanation, had not the elector stopped his course.

“Come, friends, come!” cried the latter, in his clearest tone of convivial melody; “no more of this. Wine, wine is the true philosopher’s stone—for to-day, at least. Let metals, and alkalies, and vegetables yield their claims for the discovery of the grand arcanum. This amber essence of Rudesheim is the true transmuting power, turning our very thoughts to gold, and giving to joy an ever-living spring. Fill, friends, fill!”

“Under your highness’s favour, I—hiccup! I don’t agree—I say—hiccup! that Hocheimer——”

“His highness is right, his highness is right. Essences before alkalies, juices in preference to bodies, were also the choice of——”

“Now, then, a bumper to beauty!” cried the elector, knowing well the best method to stop the mouths of both the baron and the parasite; and giving a free flow to his own animated and amorous feelings. “Up, up to the brim! Let each man think of her he loves—or loved—it is a toast for all ages—

friends, do it honour !” And the enthusiasm of the elector as he filled and drank, gave proof that the sentiment came from his very soul.

And what man — particularly what German — in those days had *not* done honour to the double inspiration of beauty and wine? Let us give to civilisation the credit of its miracles. Let refinement receive its due praise, for softening the manners of mankind, and hallowing the sweet hypocrisies of social life. But let us not forget the merits of other times — the worth of other systems — the racy vigour with which men felt and acted, the bold sincerity with which they spoke and sinned. “There is truth in wine,” was not then a mere proverb. It was a reality ; for then there was truth in man. His follies and his vices walked the day broadly, like honest libertines, scorning to skulk in the twilight obscurity of cant. The glaring crimes of those days were more shocking, but not half so demoralising as the mean vices of our own ; for they carried their condemnation and their remedy in their very doing. The emasculating fopperies, the unsocial chill of high, and the servile monkeyisms of middle life, the blight of sentiment and passion — the selfishness, the envy, the dissimulation of modern times — all these do more to unman mankind, than the generous faults of a less deceitful age had done to make it monstrous.

Manners have known so many changes since the world began to roll, that it is hard to fix a distinguishing epithet on any given epoch. There have been many a golden, and an iron, and a brazen age. Darkness and light have succeeded each other in pretty regular succession. But the times of which we treat — the midway period between the gloom of feudality and the blaze of liberty — furnish scenes and characters, free from fierce savageness on the one hand, or cunning selfishness on the other. Exceptions there were, of course, as there ever must be to general rules. But candour, at least, that jewel beyond price, was in the common affairs of life a leading principle. Men avowed openly, what, for the sake of morals had better, perhaps, have been concealed. But how often is not true dignity sacrificed to affected decency?

A Christian archbishop giving amorous toasts at his own table, is a spectacle revolting to existing notions of propriety. But we must remember the character of the times as well as that

of the man, and bear in mind that Truchses was a temporal prince, as well as a Christian hierarch.

Among the wassailers who did honour to his highness's superior wine, there was not one flincher. Even Nuenar was, on such occasions, a true German ; and Scotus, though he could not claim that title for excess, easily naturalised himself in any country or custom, when he had an object to gain. On the present occasion, he drank deeply and talked warmly ; but with little effect on either his head or heart. The disciples of modern dandyism could not afford a more cold-blooded illustration of self-command.

" Yes, your highness, yes ! beauty *is* divine ;" said he, in reply to some glowing phrase from the elector ; " divine in its essence, its attributes, and its powers. Its origin is heaven, its temple the human heart. There we may worship it, and there find irresistible reasons for making its possession the first grand aim of man."

" I say no—no—no ! " stammered Von Kriechlingen from the opposite side of the table.

" Hush ! the elector has not given his judgment on the sentiment ! " exclaimed the toad-eater.

" A fico for his judgment, or yours, or any man's, who says yes when I say no ! It's false sentiment and bad logic, I say "——

" Hush, his highness speaks."

" True, count," said Ghebhard Truchses, with a sigh, and not heeding the interruptions we have noticed. " True, our hearts are always rife with reasons to justify our desires. Alas, that our heads should so often refuse to sanctify the fiat."

" Methinks, your highness, there are cases in which there is little wisdom in appealing from the breast to the brain."

" Think you so, indeed ? you have seen much of life, and deeply into the human mind. And think you that happiness is to be found in following each impulse of the heart ? "

" In the pursuit of beauty, yes ; love is a passion not to be judged by common rules. Fools only would subject it to vulgar tests. Your highness's worst enemies don't accuse you of being one ! "

" Me ! nay, why fix on me a general remark, as though I were its only application ? "

" In questions of feeling we should never talk abstractedly

—they are all personal. And who might be a better application for whatever appertains to love, than he who is avowedly the most successful man of his day?"

"Has been, count, has been happy, from time to time—but those hours are past," said the elector, with a subdued smile; the recollection of by-gone joys checking the flush of pride raised by the Italian's insidious flattery.

"As good days are in the calendar now as the very best of former enjoyment. As bright eyes are beaming in this very town as ever shone. As witching charms are within your reach as ever were in elf-land. Life is still young. Your highness said erewhile, that wine could make it perennial. What then may not be done by love and beauty?"

"These are wild words, count, but there is a witchery in them. The very name of love, the very look of beauty, is a spell!"

"Does your highness feel the last enchantment still?"

"What meaning is there in that question?" asked Ghebhard; struck by the significant emphasis with which Scotus spoke.

"Is not the look of beauty forgotten in this revelry?"

"By my faith and honour, no! The last bright beam of loveliness sent into my breast seems to rule there like the star of destiny."

"Perhaps it *is* such. But many a wandering light has illumined by turns that sensitive and capacious heart, if common report speaks truly."

"In that it tells no lie, Count Scotus. I have often felt beauty's influence—always yielded to it—never forgotten it. The flame it lights in my breast is undying."

"But not consuming, if I may venture to judge of your highness's temperament."

"In God's truth, no!" said the elector with vivacity, "nourishing rather—keeping the fount of feeling alive and warm in its very source."

"And each new spring bubbling up through the old one?" interrupted Scotus, with a tone at once fawning and inquisitorial.

"Even so, count, you know the human heart, and mine, it seems; so I need not confess the power that loveliness wields over me. Neither will I admit the inconstancy implied in

your reproach. I have loved often, but always sincerely ; and truth is not to be effaced by new impressions."

"Your highness would impugn the doctrine that man can love but once?"

"I repudiate and scorn it, for I know its falsity. There may be men who have loved but once, but then it is only wonderful that they have ever loved at all. He is an unhappy being, who has met in life but one woman worth loving ; and more so still, who meeting others, finds the effects of his first passion a check rather than an encouragement to new ones. No, count, this dogma of the insensible is a cheat. The true distinction is this :—He who has once loved truly can never again love lightly. The charm of the real passion guards him against the spurious phantasies which imposed on him before."

"But in wedded life, when congenial hearts are joined, can either find room for new impressions?"

"Alas ! count, there you strike a chord that can find no echo in my experience, however its melody may vibrate in my heart. Wedded life ! What an unattainable heaven have you opened to my envious gaze !"

"Nothing is beyond the reach of the elastic mind, that is not warped by prejudice and will not shrink at sacrifices."

"Tell me, count," resumed the elector, as though he did not heed the last observation, "tell me truly, does your skill in star-learning lead you to believe that two minds, born at different periods but in the same planetary conjunctions, may hold occult communion or sympathy, without personal acquaintanceship existing?"

"Your highness puts a home and a hard question ; for nought in the whole system of celestial influences has so much puzzled the star-seers of these and other times. For my own part—and with a genuine doubt of my own authority—I can only say, that on that particular head the great master of astrology, Geber, your highness's near namesake, and myself, always agreed together."

The elector thrilled involuntarily. He knew that the great astrologist just named in such familiar companionship was dead full eight centuries. He smiled as he recovered himself. The Italian did not seem to observe him, but continued.

"To come to a just conclusion on so intricate a point, it

must be first decided whether stars be causes or signs — whether they incline without compelling, or rule and regulate sympathies as well as constitutions. Did I wish to make a parade of learning, I might quote the authority of Albubater, Origan, and Pontanus, in the affirmative of your query. Panzonius, Pellantius, and others, in the negative. But so many nice distinctions rise that it would be only a maze of confusion to attempt a disentanglement, until I were possessed of your highness's horoscope, and the fair lady's as well."

"Nay, count, by Jupiter and Venus in conjunction! you've left this earth and flown to other planets. I spoke not of myself, nor of a lady."

"Your highness's thoughts were in my mind, rather than your words in mine ear."

"If you can read the stars it is not strange that you might read my thoughts, for they too were fixed in Heaven, or at least in one of Heaven's masterpieces."

"She *is* most lovely," said Scotus.

"*She!* who, Count Scotus?"

"She whom your highness thought of."

"Nay, this is but trifling, count."

"The thought of woman is always such, to him who durst not, or cannot marry."

"A priest neither can nor dare."

"Martin Luther was a priest, and did both."

"He had not a principedom and an archbishopric to lose, count," said the elector, smiling, and glad that the conversation took a turn less personal to himself, or rather to the object which had so occupied his mind.

"He had happiness and immortality to gain," answered the Italian, with a serious and almost solemn tone — he could assume *any*.

"He paid, perhaps, too dear a price for either," replied Ghebhard Truchses, in an accent of deep sincerity — which he could not feign.

"There are two kinds of worldly immortality," resumed Scotus, "the one, gained by the sublime labours of science, is conducive to happiness or linked with misery according to the construction of the minds of its few possessors. They only may presume to weigh the value of the price they pay for it — they alone can judge, or feel its amount." At these words the

Italian's eyes became fixed, his brow was knit, his lips were firmly compressed, and he seemed involuntarily to clench his hands. The elector could not resist a creeping sensation of doubt and awe. Ulrick Von Leckenstein listened and looked with breathless interest. Nuenar was a stern and silent observer. Baron Conrad was loudly arguing with Von Heyen, and one or two others. The toad-eater was asleep.

Scotus in a few moments recovered from his apparent deep abstraction, and continued in a calm tone —

"There is another immortality, such as Luther has purchased, that is itself happiness to those who live for fame, and happiness being the great and true object of life, whatever procures it can scarce be said to be above its value."

"The question we discussed, good count, was Martin Luther's marriage," said the elector: "the greatness of this light of true religion I am ready to admit; also the weight of his example in most things. But even the boldest man will shrink from sacrilege — and it is well known that Luther struggled long with his passion for Katharine Bore, ere he stole her from her convent and made her his wife. Remember, count, she was a nun, and vowed to Christ."

"Would Luther have struggled or hesitated, had she been a simple canoness, and only wore christianity's symbol round her neck?"

These words were murmured by the Italian, in a close whisper, which none but the elector could hear.

The effect they produced on the latter was everything the speaker — or rather the whisperer — could have wished. The elector absolutely started for an instant from his seat. Surprise is not the word to express what he felt. It was a combination of shame, wonder, and self-anger, that at once rushed upon him. He felt himself doubly degraded in having betrayed his own feeling — or his fancy rather, for it had not gained the solidity of feeling — and in having in a manner compromised the name of a high-born and innocent female, with whom he had never exchanged a word, and whom he had never seen but once. There was something terribly poignant in this first shock; for the keenest point in all Ghebhard Truchses' high notion of honour was that connected with the sacred delicacy, due to every woman whom he loved, admired, or aspired to win.

But this first effect as instantly subsided under a sense of

perfect self-acquittal, which, as we shall show, was almost as painful as the self-formed accusal. The elector's mind ran back in a moment's summary, over all that had passed within it, or that he had said in connection with its main thought, since he gazed with such delight that morning on the brilliant face and graceful form of Agnes de Mansfelt. The determination to know her was as quick as the admiration she excited. Ghebhard Truchses invariably followed up his first impressions. The enthusiasm of his feelings gave him a quickness of perception that less ardent minds may not conceive, much less be caught by ; and while his eloquent sincerity was almost always successful in generating a return of feeling, pride, gratitude and honour combined to keep him faithful to affections once so deeply felt, even when others rose up in his heart ; as though each full-grown crop of passion had dropped some seeds in the fertile soil, to preserve its memory from the decaying influences of time, absence, and variety. The success consequent on his own persuasive qualities, and the ardour with which he entered into every new pursuit, had given Ghebhard Truchses that half-formed belief in occult sympathies, which the philosophy then in vogue had gone so absurdly far as to attribute to vegetables and minerals, as well as to human beings. It was a floating idea of this nature, connected with his incipient hopes relative to Agnes, that had prompted his recent question to Scotus. But he recollected well that he had not dropped any hint that could bear a possible allusion to her. To Nuenar alone had he spoken of her. Communication between him and the Italian had been since impossible. What then could be the inference in such a mind as our hero's, but that this latter extraordinary person had a positive power of divining his thoughts, perhaps of reading his destiny ? Truchses would, and not unwillingly, have conceded its control to a planet or a constellation. But that it was in the keeping of mortal man — or even of a man raised by some supernatural means above the level of mortality — was a suspicion accompanied by intense humiliation.

All that we have here described passed with lightning speed in our hero's brain ; and his presence of mind as quickly recovered its balance. In difficulties purely personal, his generous feelings might lead him at times astray ; but when another — and that other a woman — was concerned, it was rarely,

indeed, his discretion was found at fault. He therefore made not the slightest remark in return to Scotus's significant whisper ; but while its subtle voice seemed to hiss serpent-like in his ear, he kept his countenance and his tongue under command. His first conviction was that he was more or less, if not in the Italian's power, at least under his influence. He had no time to sift the question. He took it for granted ; and convinced at the same instant that a nearer union with this agent of destiny, if he were such, could not be avoided, and might even lead to essential good, he immediately decided to draw the connection as close as possible. He therefore said to his mysterious guest, rising at the same time — a signal which the company acknowledged for a breaking-up of the party,

“Count Scotus, you lodge with me to-night, and during your stay in Cologne. Johann Hilpaert is not a fitting host for such a man as you.”

Scotus bowed assentingly. The party retired to the withdrawing-rooms. The elector, Scotus, and Nuenar walking with steady pace, Von Kriechlingen and the rest making their way as best they could. All broke into small groups, or conversed in couples. The elector and Nuenar were joined by Von Kriechlingen, who made some clever efforts to stand straight and listen to what was said by his friends. They only passed a few general remarks on the great business they had in hand ; the honest old baron not being equal to the comprehension of details, even had they been inclined to trust them to him just then.

Scotus approached his table-neighbour young Ulrick, who had watched him whenever he spoke, and followed him still with fascinated gaze.

“Well, Herr Ulrick,” said he familiarly, “you now go, no doubt, after this sensual repast, to the pure delights of a love-feast with the woman of your heart?”

Von Leckenstein blushed deeply, and thrilled with astonishment at the wonderful divination which had so fathomed his intentions. He could not reply ; but Scotus saved him the trouble of attempting it.

“You are a happy and a fortunate man,” resumed the conjurer, — “it is few who have the luck — or the merit — to captivate a duchess at first sight.”

Ulrick's brain turned with surprise and delight.

"Follow up the stroke — boldly, vigorously — you shall not want a friend — I promise you success," said the tempter, squeezing Ulrick's hand firmly ; and after a little while taking leave of the elector, for the purpose of making arrangements for fixing his residence in the palace.

We need scarcely stop to dwell on the bewildering sensations which agitated young Ulrick's mind. It may be better to state that Scotus had been that morning a keen observer of all that passed in the balcony and below it, before the period of his assuming his station in his carriage, and following with his train the line of the procession. Mixing with the crowd, in a cloak that concealed his finery, and, as occasion required, hid his face from view, he had closely followed and stood by the elector, whom he had resolved to make his victim ; and in pursuance of his system he watched his every movement, like a hawk hovering over ere it pounces on the prey. Other motives fixed his attention on the group in the balcony, which so completely absorbed the elector's observation ; and he had too keen a tact not to distinguish the individual object *it* had chosen. In what passed during the dinner conversation he had trusted somewhat to chance. Had Truchses been indifferent to the allusion so directly hazarded in reference to the canoness, he reckoned on the power of his jargon and his perseverance for forcing the elector into some fanciful belief, connected with the unknown lady. But in spite of Truchses' reserve, the Italian saw he had hit upon the right track for working on his feelings. His other objects in watching the balcony, and his late conversation with Von Leckenstein, will be by and by explained.

CHAPTER VI.

THE quiet dinner-party at Kriechlingen House formed a very passive contrast to that at the archiepiscopal palace. While the worthy owner of the mansion was laudably employed, as we have shown, in doing honour to the elector's wine and

violence to his own wits, the four fair beings from whom we have been too long separated, were partaking of a temperate, but nobly-served, repast, with the invalided wife of the absent baron, and the mother of the sisters who so gracefully did together the duties of hostess.

Baroness Von Kriechlingen had for several years suffered from a malady, which gradually undermining her health and strength, and rendering her a prisoner in her private apartments, did not, however, deprive her of the domestic solace of her family circle, or the company of such guests as visited from friendship rather than ceremony. She was an amiable, unpresuming, and pious woman, with good sense to bear with those faults in her husband which she could not control, and good feeling to instil into the minds of her children lessons which she had no power to enforce. Her daughters loved her the better, and probably did not obey her the worse, for this. There is a spring of generosity in young minds, which almost always keeps moist and fresh the instinct of duty to an indulgent parent.

The baroness's family party was this day completed by the presence of old Cyriacus Spangenberg, the chaplain of Mansfelt, under whose care Agnes had made her journey from Thuringia to the banks of the Rhine. Respect for this venerable churchman threw a certain degree of restraint over the sisters, to whom he had been till the previous day quite a stranger; and they were not sorry when he retired to his afternoon devotion, which conscience and habit rendered as necessary to his mind as digestion was to his body. It was then the most pleasing duty of the day was called for, on the part of the sisters — the task of reading by turns, or playing on the lute or virginals, to their mother, whose life of monotonous seclusion required such relief. It is true there was little instruction and much less amusement to be found for two lively, not to say giddy, girls, in the controversial writings of those days; and it was such that Baroness Von Kriechlingen delighted in, and over the leaden pages of which Fredolinda and Emma often, in their own despite, felt their lids to close and their heads to droop. The book chosen for the edification of the present evening, selected by Spangenberg in honour of his celebrated friend Melancthon, was a translation in heavy German of his famous defence of the tenets of Luther against the attacks of the Paris doctors,

entitled in the original, "*Adversus furiosum Parisiensem Logastrorum decretum.*"

The very title of the tract, announced by the baroness as she pulled it from under the cushion of her easy chair, was enough to appal any less devoted individuals than those who so cheerfully set themselves to the task of wading through this mass of controversy. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Agnes de Mansfelt had no such responsibility, and they willingly acted on the baroness's suggestion that they should seek together the refreshment of the garden air, and the wholesome exercise of a promenade on its massive terrace or in its broad alleys.

The friends were soon abroad; and they were not long in turning to account the wished-for opportunity for undisturbed communion.

"Thank Heaven, thank Heaven, I am free at last!" exclaimed the duchess, as she reached the centre walk of the garden, and, concealed from all observation by a high cypress hedge, she threw her arms round Agnes's neck, and burst into tears.

"Oh, Agnes!" said she, as she conquered her interrupting sobs and recalled her scattered ideas, "this relief is like heaven itself! But for this I should have died outright! My best, my dearest friend, I am—even in your arms—the most wretched being that breathes."

Agnes attempted no commonplace consolation, because she felt her friend's distress. Deep sorrow is often garrulous; true sympathy never. Anne understood this.

"How good you are to me!" continued she. "How considerate in not speaking to me! That silent embrace is worth a thousand words. It is the true heart-eloquence. Oh, Agnes, that I could be as when last we parted! That I could blot two years from my life's history! or that life itself were blotted out!—Why should I live?"

"Tell me rather, dearest Anne, what has so embittered life? Speak freely and fully to me. Confidence in me will do more than any random condolence I could offer, for I am ignorant of the immediate cause of this suffering."

"Oh, that I might tell you all!"

"Confide to me what you like, no more; what you can or ought to tell—what may relieve your mind in the mere

telling, or lead to its relief through any means of mine. There is nothing within the scope of my ability that I will not do for you."

Agnes felt an instant inclination to include the word duty in this pledge. But she checked it as soon as the idea rose up. She was not one of those who damp an offer of assistance with reservations. She would freely have risked her life at the moment for her friend's sake; she felt that she would be at any time ready to sacrifice it to her sense of duty. Therefore she was not wont to boast, even negatively, of the latter; and she never willingly uttered anything that might bear the colour of self-applause.

"You know not how criminal I am—nor do I know how you could serve me," said the duchess.

Agnes was startled. The notion of guilt in connexion with her friend had not crossed her mind. This self-accusal at once astonished and shocked her. She said nothing; but her expressive countenance spoke for her—or in spite of her.

"Yes, it is too true," resumed Duchess Anne; "but you must hear me before you condemn me quite. Indeed I know that it is not in your nature nor in that of our friendship, that you should do otherwise. I will speak candidly to you, in as far as I *can* do so. My conscience seems already lightened of half its load—but not my heart of any of its suffering. Dearest Agnes, *that* is breaking!"

A renewed burst of tears choked further utterance for awhile.

"Speak, speak, my sweet friend," said Agnes,—"I listen with my very soul."

They had by this time gained the bottom of the large and dismal garden, the grotesque solemnity of which added a deeper shade to the sufferer's air of woe.

"Let us walk on the terrace, Agnes," said she. "The look of the Rhine will soothe, though even its placid grandeur cannot solace me. But I must not wear you out with my complaints—and alas! I have none to blame but myself."

As the duchess gazed far over the houses of the lower part of the town towards the river, and marked it flowing on in full and rapid course, it seemed to impart insensibly that feeling of calm which all who have so marked it will understand, and which she had anticipated.

"Now I am much better—more equal to the detail of my shame," she resumed. "Our last night's conversation, dear Agnes, told you much of my causes of wretchedness. I had hoped to command myself sufficiently to conceal the rest. But a circumstance to-day forces me to a further exposure of my griefs—forces me, Agnes, for it is not in mere selfishness that I inflict my sorrows on you. I need support—you, my friend, are, happily for yourself and me——"

"Dearest Anne, you lose time—we may be broken in upon," said Agnes, with an affectionate tone, glad to interrupt the utterance of a compliment to herself.

"Well, then, to be brief—I have told you, Agnes, of my husband's estrangement from me, his neglect, his abandonment, almost from the very first months of our marriage. There was enough in the endurance of all this for sorrow, but nothing for self-reproach. Nor have I, you will allow, laid my complaints too heavily on the duke. I have admitted his good qualities, his frankness, his courage, his indulgence, the amiability and gracefulness, which so soon won my heart, as well as the levity which threw it aside almost as soon as won. I have dwelt on all this before."

"Then why, dear Anne, repeat it now? it is acutely painful to me, and you have avowed it not to be to the purpose of what you would communicate."

"Bear with me, Agnes; as a woman you can do so."

"Did you, my friend, always bear with the duke, as a wife?"

"As Heaven is my witness, yes! I never reproached him, but with my silent tears. I could—ay, and can even now, feign smiles for those I am indifferent to—but never for him I loved."

A sigh—for her friend's sake—was Agnes's only answer to the avowal, which, as she thought, explained much of the unhappiness which marriage had inflicted on the Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg. Our heroine knew, from an instinct of good sense, what many cannot learn even from experience, that there is a virtuous hypocrisy founded on generous forbearance, which forms one of the cardinal blessings of wedded life.

"Well, Agnes," continued the duchess, "for nearly two years this state of things went on. I began at length to lie

down, as it were, under the burden of my misery. I ceased even to weep or sigh. I was sinking into utter apathy, when a new turn, the worst of all, was given to the deep current of my fate. You know that the duke, with all his light, and, I may be allowed to say, frivolous traits of character, has a passionate love for the romantic mysteries of science; often have I known him to pass nights of watching with some alchemist, over the poisonous fumes of crucibles and alembics; or in cold and rain on the topmost tower of the castle, staring with astrologers to catch a glimpse of some new star through the impervious clouds. Like everything he undertakes, those fancies are pushed to excess, and abandoned ere time is given for a result. You may judge of the numbers of persons attracted to Coburg by those notorious pursuits of the duke. You may have heard of the profuseness of a patronage which is too often misplaced. The castle is for ever swarming with strange figures and wild faces. The costumes of almost all parts of the known world are to be seen in our courts, and every professor of science or pretender to it finds a ready welcome there."

"And might not all this, however irksome, still be borne with?" asked Agnes, with a slight accent of reproach.

"All this! Alas! Agnes, this is not the point of grievance, I make no complaint of it. Do not mistake, but listen to me. About three months back, my husband introduced to me a stranger, an Italian, one of the numerous train I have just mentioned, a professor of most arts—and oh, Agnes, what a master of all! I cannot now, even if I would, enter into minute particulars of this man's powers. He is a miracle of talent and knowledge: scarce had I seen him ere I felt his influence—I had not known him a week when he seemed the very lord of my destiny. He wholly captivated my mind—but fear nought else—he never touched my heart."

"Thank Heaven for that at least! I dreaded more than you have avowed," said Agnes, again embracing her friend.

"I saw that you did by your looks. No, no, Agnes; I am degraded by my subjection to this man, but not, in the common sense, dishonoured."

"I should like to know him," said Agnes, a hope flashing across her mind that she might be able, in some way, to serve

the duchess, as a mediator between her and the fate this stranger seemed, as it were, to personify.

"Heaven forefend ! one victim is enough," exclaimed the duchess — "though you, perhaps, would be safe from his influence ; for there is something in you, dear Agnes ——"

"That will not let me listen to my own praise, and the disparagement of a too partial friend. Go on, go on ! I can now breathe freely while I listen."

"I have wherewithal to tell will make you tremble for me still. You will believe me, Agnes, that to regain my husband's wandering affections has been my great, almost my sole object from the first days of his estrangement. He of whom we speak soon read my mind, and on that weak point gained quick mastery over it. He made no circuitous approaches to my confidence ; but at once convinced me of his power, by proving his knowledge of my most secret thoughts. In short, he persuaded me that he could remove all obstacles to my happiness, could recover the duke's constancy, and attach him to me for ever. I cannot now enter into a detail of the various means he used for the attainment of this end. The spells, the charms, the philters that we worked together, and administered to my husband ——"

"With what success ?" asked Agnes.

"Alas ! I know not how to answer that question," replied the duchess, with a sigh, "and I was just about to anticipate it by an account of the changing effects produced by those many remedies. Marvellous indeed have they been ! at times all-powerful for their object—again total failures ; now bringing my wayward lord back to my long-forsaken embraces, with penitence and love ; and then banishing him from me, in a more distant abandonment than ever. So did those witcheries work for several months."

"And did the doubt never strike you, Anne," interrupted Agnes, "that the effects which you attributed to magic might have been produced by the magician, for his own purposes, by arts of natural reason rather than enchantment ? might not his influence with the duke have acted as a counter-current to his power over you ?"

"Thousands of wild doubts have flitted across me, Agnes, like the spirits which a conjurer might call up. I have been

lost in a maze of wonderment and fear ; I only know one thing certain—I am wretched !”

“ Dearest Anne, you exaggerate—if not your feelings, at least their provocation. Your sensitiveness invests the phantoms of imagination with solid forms. There is nought in all you have revealed which can cast a shadow of reproach, save the facility with which you embarked your chances of recovered happiness on the venture of an impostor’s professions.”

“ Hush, hush, Agnes ! how loud you speak, and how imprudently ! You little know the power of him whose anger you thus risk,” said the duchess, casting round an anxious glance, which almost caused Agnes to smile while she was half disposed to weep.

“ And has this man’s influence over you never been turned to a more directly personal aim ? ” asked she, sure that her frightened friend had told her but little of her embarrassments.

A deep sigh was the answer ; and after a short pause the duchess resumed —

“ I warned you, Agnes, that I durst not tell you all. I am bound by pledges that I shudder at the mere thought of breaking.”

“ Then pause in your recital, or quit the subject, dearest Anne. I have no curiosity, beyond the hope of giving you relief.”

“ Yet I cannot keep wholly silent—no, I must go on. He *has* talked to me, Agnes, has tempted me ; but in language so vague, so mystical, that my senses ever seemed bewildered, even when my reason was unconvinced and my heart untouched. I know not what he aimed at most. He always appeared to have several objects at once : in one, alas ! he succeeded but too completely.”

“ And that one ? ”

“ Must not—dare not be revealed ! ”

“ Would that I might but see this man who has so bewitched you, my friend ! ”

“ You have seen him, Agnes.”

“ I have ! where ? when ? ”

“ Oh, ask me not—I fear I have gone too far in saying even what I have said. More I must not reveal—at least

for the present. I shall perhaps gain more confidence, more strength, by and by. Your friendship is an unspeakable support. With it to aid me, I shall, by degrees, grow able to resist the doom that seems to press me down. You are my guardian angel!"

With these words the duchess again clasped Agnes in her arms; while the latter, almost afraid of the responsibility thus forced upon her, yet unwilling to check the growing confidence which might best enable her friend to cope with the unholy power that oppressed her — could only silently return the embrace that was accompanied by the most endearing epithets.

Agnes began, however, to apprehend that any effective confidence, which might acquaint her with the more particular causes of her friend's anxiety, was distant, if not altogether doubtful; so evidently had the dread of this mysterious oppressor gained possession of her mind. But the duchess, as if suddenly bursting from her thralldom, abruptly exclaimed —

"No — I will bear the tyranny no longer. He *cannot* know what passes here, though he has persuaded me of his supernatural power. I will speak freely, Agnes — I dread him not!"

This was said in a high and fearless tone, but which, as she continued, was insensibly changed to the murmured cadence of returning alarm.

"Know, then, that I have bound myself to his service by fearful pledges, to do his bidding in all things, as the price of the recovered happiness which he has so solemnly insured to me — to keep secret his words, his wishes, his deeds, be they what they may — but there is one circumstance of criminal and treacherous duplicity which I have acted in, and which weighs me down with remorse — one which I have sworn to conceal by oaths, the recollection of which makes me thrill. Tell me, Agnes, am I bound by an unholy pledge, taken in terror and repented of in tears of my heart's blood?"

"No — certainly not!" answered Agnes, unhesitatingly. She saw it was no time to trifle with her friend's unhappiness, or to risk the fluctuation of her feelings. "No, Anne, there is absolution in our consciences for even those monstrous engagements. Is it not then a duty to break from all that binds us to them?"

"It is, it is, my best friend; my heart acknowledges the

reasoning, it is the voice of virtue's self that speaks — now then at once to unburden my full heart! You know, Agnes, how it is that I am here now — I, a princess, with royal blood in my veins, and with right to a reigning coronet on my brow — yet, without even the slightest ornament of my rank, ring, carcanet, ear-drop, or neck-string, unjewelled and unadorned as the poorest burgher's wife that toils for daily bread?"

Agnes bowed assent. She had heard the common talk, which told of the mysterious disappearance of the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg's splendid jewels, some weeks before, and much of the coarse scandal which disfigured the report. Delicacy towards her friend prevented any allusion to the painful circumstance in previous conversations, and even now did not allow her to speak of it.

"Yes! you, too, have heard the tale, but it is for me to unravel the mystery. Know, then, ——"

At this instant the two sisters appeared on the terrace, coming from the house; and they rapidly advanced to the friends, who could but ill brook the interruption of a colloquy in which both were so much interested. But they could find no excuse for declining the well-meant yet worrying attentions of their young and lively hostesses, who continued to bear them company, until the light showers of an April afternoon drove them to the shelter of the mansion; and then the decorous necessities of good breeding claimed a renewal of their visit to the baroness in her private apartments, into which Spangenberg had preceded them.

The sun had withdrawn from the busy scene it had so brilliantly lighted, and the buildings of the town and the waters of the Rhine grew dark in the hues of the eventide, ere the friends found an opportunity to attempt a renewal of their broken conversation. This was at length occasioned by the periodical return of the drowsy fit which at sunset invariably visited the invalid, to recompense her for the nights of almost sleepless suffering she had endured so long and so patiently. Old Cyriacus, too, accustomed for nearly three parts of a century to those vigils which wore deep into the night, and to that early rising which added precious hours to the too fleeting day, could rarely resist the propensity to slumber which commonly steals on the studious, the infirm, or the idle at moth-time. The pious, but, nevertheless, somnolent discourse

which he had so fluently holden during full two hours, on the intricate subjects of election and grace — the then leading topics of controversy — had almost overcome the sisters as well as their mother. It required a strong excitement to bear up against the “poppy and mandragora” qualities of the good chaplain’s conversation. Such was, however, actively alive in the bosoms of the impatient friends, particularly in that of Duchess Anne, who could scarcely restrain the gnawing irritability that urged her to break away, long before the baroness’s head nodded listlessly on her breast, or Freda’s and Emma’s eyes began to wink.

“Now, dearest Agnes, we may escape,” whispered the duchess, when unequivocal sights and sounds pronounced the reign of Morpheus to have set in; and uttering a few words of apology in the same cautious tone to Freda, she was quietly leaving the apartment, followed by Agnes, who willingly obeyed her signal, when a loud voice on the stairs and the abrupt opening of the door of the ante-room arrested the friends, and awoke all the others of the party.

“No, Ulrick, no — a thousand times no!” exclaimed Baron Conrad, in his highest tone, for it was he who now came boisterously on, soured with the Rhenish grape, and disputing, as it were, with his still most submissive nephew every inch of the ground from the elector’s palace to his wife’s saloon.

“I differ with you, Ulrick — I say you are wrong, boy; and by Heavens I will not be contradicted!”

“Nay, uncle, I did not presume to contradict ——”

“Not in words I allow — but you did in thoughts. Don’t deny it, boy — that’s making it worse — don’t deny it, Ulrick, I say!”

“I deny nothing — admit nothing — assert nothing, good uncle.”

“That’s just what I hate mortally, for I have nothing to argue against. I hate that cunning hypocritical silence — why don’t you speak out like a man? why don’t you give me the lie? why the fiend, don’t ——”

“My good uncle, remember that your foot is on the threshold of a sick lady’s room; and that the pious chaplain of Mansfelt is within ear-shot, and the duchess ——”

“Prating popinjay! a sick lady’s room!” said the baron with a mimicking tone, and stopping short at the door. “Is

it thus you speak to me of my own wife, my own flesh and my own bone? I have a good mind to knock you down by way of comment on your puppyism."

"Nay, uncle, you know I am your flesh and blood too," replied Ulrick, smiling, and looking with an insinuating air on his intractable kinsman.

"You are, you dog, I know it, I know it—for you look this moment the very image of your poor mother!" exclaimed the old man, catching him round the neck with one arm, and leaning at the same time against the door for support, and hugging him with such a pressure as a tender-hearted bear might give to its unlicked offspring.

This somewhat sentimental attitude and situation was disturbed by the door bursting open, and the baron with his fast-imprisoned nephew staggering together in the room. The good old lady, effectually aroused and fearfully startled, sprang from her easy chair with a tremulous scream. Old Spangenberg, less nervous, opened his eyes wide, stared round, and turned them up to heaven with an instinct of devotion aroused in all cases of alarm. Duchess Anne and Agnes de Mansfelt stepped back out of the line of operations, while the sisters darted towards it, one catching her father in her arms—the other placing a timid yet affectionate hand in that of her cousin.

The baron was instantly called to a sense of his indecorum, and to almost temporary sobriety, by a sudden stoppage of that mental mechanism which wine sets in motion and good feeling not uncommonly arrests. He stopped short, and putting one hand to his forehead to assist in quieting the whirligig motion of his brain, and still grasping his nephew with the other, he exclaimed,—

"Hold, hold! stand fast, Ulrick! death of the martyrs! this is too bad. We are wrong, boy—very wrong both of us. Stand fast, I say!"

"I am standing fast, uncle, transfixed with shame to come thus into such a presence."

"Then, by St. Paul, if thou art standing steady the house is still running a mad rig! so! so! all is better now—the ceiling is square again, and the walls have ceased their merry-go-round, and the furniture has recovered its legs. Grant me grace, ladies all! I see my uncourteous intrusion in its true light—I did not expect such a company in this chamber—I

forgot my guests and myself. Forgive me, ladies—forgive me, venerable sir, my good wife pardons me, I know ere I ask her—too quickly—too quickly—it is always so. Have I done thee mischief, my kind help-mate? have I shook thy gentle nerves?”

With these words the baron passed by the princess and the pastor as well as his daughters, and Agnes, whom he considered as a member of the family, his warm heart pointing out the invalided partner of his life as the first object that called for attention. She soon reassured him; and he then approached Duchess Anne, next the venerable divine, and lastly Agnes, addressing to each hasty and sincere apologies. He finally called his daughters to come and kiss him, “and stifle,” as he said, “the rising reproaches of conscience for his breach of manners, together with the memory of that last bottle of the elector’s Stein-wine, which was too potent for any head less hard than the rocky soil it grew on.”

In the mean time young Leckenstein had made his peace with Freda for his breach of engagement; an easy task, when her wonted willingness to excuse any error of his was strengthened by his declaration that he stayed away only from the necessity of caring after her father. He said nothing of Scotus or his honied insinuations. Yet he thought much of them; and he was soon at the duchess’s side, propelled by he knew not what occult influence. It was vanity, whose strongly flowing tide was carrying poor Ulrick with it among shoals and quicksands, to escape from which he had no pilot.

“But I shall make no further excuses,” said the baron, “I will rather pull up by future attentions for past negligence. We will have supper soon; and in the mean time, girls, let the tapers be lighted in the saloon, and amuse her highness and our kinswoman of Mansfelt with a party of primero or shovel-board; or bring forth the ghitterns and be musical; or dabble in your ’broidery-looms; or string your fancy beads; or cut out your filigree,”——

“Good, kind father! where is your conscience now, that was so troublesome erewhile?” said Emma, embracing him and cutting short his list of time-killing expedients. “Come, dear Duchess Anne, come, Agnes, let me be your leader into some of those choice ways of pleasantness. Freda and Ulrick will find a path of their own.”

"Ay, that's right, Emma, thou art well disposed to do the honours, I see. That's right, that's right; keep close to your lovely guests, my girl—never leave them a minute to themselves—don't let conversation flag, or merry-making be worn-out. Make them laugh, and sing, and sport away the time. That's the true way to show hospitality and dispense happiness. Day of my life! we must all be gay to-night. Could you not, my love, for this once bear to be wheeled into the 'Trojan-tapestried saloon? Well, well!" continued the baron, ; suffering wife shook a dissentient head at the proposal, "we must not press you into the jolly service. But his reverence here will join us at supper, and at our after-revelry too I hope, and give a blessing to the gaiety which I am resolved shall stir deftly through the whole house to-night?"

To this interrogative assertion the old pastor replied, with a benevolent smile.

"Much thanks, good baron, are due for your honourable entertainment; but you must not forget that old age and long habit cannot be safely tampered with. I never eat a night-meal; and I retire to study whenever the signal-bells of papistry ring out their summons to the vesper mummery."

"Never eat supper! Fast and pray! By St. George, pastor!—I swear by St. George, for chivalry sake, not from papist reverence!—By St. George! this is a bad custom, and savours more of the beast and the scarlet woman, methinks, than matins or vespers, nones or complin. Commend me to the man who prays on a full stomach. The mind is never at ease else—and devotion suits ill with a parched palate or a craving maw. Come, come, pastor, bear with us to-night—it's only once in a way."

"'Tis well for you, baron, to do these things. You are still young; but eighty and two brook them not," said Spangenberg, mildly yet firmly.

"Why, to be sure, I do count a good score years under that. But a quarter of a century more or less is a trifle in the age of a man. I saw one drink to-day bumper on bumper, bottle after bottle, and making nought of it; yet he would reckon you to be but a boy in years, and me almost a sucking babe."

"He must be a prodigy; I would say a miracle, had not the display of those mighty dispensations ceased upon earth,

and only existed now in the impure, superstitious, and vile cozenry of Rome. Threescore years and ten is the natural limit of man's life. He who surpasses it has need of great thanksgiving to the Lord, and he who approaches it would do well to cast off the worn-out mantle of worldly vanities, and turn from ways of deboshed indulgence into the paths of godliness and grace. Who is the sage, good baron, of whom you speak?"

This question was an inexpressible relief to Baron Conrad, who had winced acutely under the words which preceded.

"Who is he?" said the baron, with a glowing front and confused utterance: "that I believe, pastor, to be a hard question to answer, but he calls himself Count Scotus; and you may well call him a prodigy, in acquirements, at any rate, even if you doubt his age."

"An eminent name," said Spangenberg, "eminent for both good and evil bearers thereof. I have not heard of it as belonging to one noted in this present generation, nay, nor for many ages back. In remote times it was borne by more than one of mark."

"In remote times!" repeated the baron, with a quick accent of curiosity. "How far back? and by whom, good pastor?"

"Why, first, there was a pious monk from Ireland, named Marianus Scotus, a bright ornament—for days of darkness—of the Abbey of Fulda, in the eleventh century, a learned chronicler, and a near relation of the venerable Bede."

"No, it cannot be him—he must come of a less pious family," muttered Baron Conrad; while Ulrick trod on his foot by way of cautious remembrance, and a check on his garrulity.

"Next there was John Scotus, otherwise Duns, an English Franciscan, and a profound doctor of theology, who died in this very city of Cologne about the year 1300, under circumstances terrible to be told."

"Are you sure he was an Englishman, and that he died, respected sir?" asked the baron, with a tone of doubt.

"We have good authority for his birth having taken place in the town of Dunstable, in Britain, and as it occurred full three centuries back, we need not stretch our faith to be certain he is dead," replied Spangenberg with a smile, which the twilight did not allow his host to notice.

"Humph!" said the baron, or the incredulous and half-uttered interjection which that orthography is admitted to represent.

"And Paulus Jovius, with other credible historians, tells us that, being struck with apoplexy, which was taken for the blow of death, this learned divine awoke in his coffin, and after having gnawed the flesh from his hands in agony, he dashed his brains out in despair against the stone walls of his tomb."

"I don't believe it!" vehemently cried the baron.

"It has been doubted," said Spangenberg, calmly.

"Doubted! doubted! and well it may be, for it's a bare-faced lie, with your good favour. Ha, ha, ha," exclaimed the baron, laughing outright, "he might have been buried alive, perhaps, but he rose again, as sure as Lazarus—ay, and he walks the earth to this very hour—to this very hour, my good pastor—at least I think it must be him.—Don't you, Ulrick?"

"Alas, alas! that the fleshpots and wine-cups should for ever overload the stomachs and send up their vapour to the brains of the children of men! Verily, verily, the debaucheries of old, the seething sins of paganism, are revived among us! The world is rife with drunkenness, and rational beings reduce themselves to the base level of field beasts. Oh, wash out, good Lord, this stain from the civilised earth!"

While the pastor involuntarily uttered these words, in under tones of pious solemnity, the baron had time to recover himself, being most uncomfortably warned of his abrupt and profane speech, by sundry thumps in the ribs from his nephew's elbow, the only answer given by the latter to his appeal. None of the ladies felt quite at their ease; but they remained silent, as the baron exclaimed,

"You do me wrong, worthy pastor, you do me wrong. I have taken a cheerful glass to-day, it is true, more perhaps than was meet, but it was this Count Scotus—or this Monk Scotus, as I think he will turn out to be—who led me and others too far. He is a wonderful man, in every way, good pastor; a very magician, trust me; a wizard of the first water, as one might say, like the diamond worth a thousand sequins, which he crushed to powder with a hammer to-day, and made whole again, by an impure puff of the Abbot of St. Kennett's breath."

Cyriacus Spangenberg was no ascetic. He had lived long in the world and had sad experience of excess and extravagance,

in the service of the Mansfelt family, and in the doings of the late Count. He knew how to humour a man under the influence of liquor, and he also understood the courtesy due to even a tipsy host in his own house. He therefore replied, in a tone of benevolent bantering,

"Nay then, baron, with your good leave, I should rather say this Scotus, whom you call a count, was more likely to be that famous conjurer Michael Scott, or Scotus of the north, who was notorious for his knowledge of the black art in the olden time, for his familiar spirit in the shape of a grey cat, and for riding in the air on a broomstick, or a flying horse, I really forget which."

"It is more likely, pastor, it is more likely, as you say," replied Baron Conrad, with a somewhat subdued tone. "What more is known of this same Michael? Who waits without? Bring tapers here, I say — this is no fit talk for twilight. Pray, pastor, what more of him?"

"Why, nothing in particular, good mine honourable host. I know nought more, except that he was buried in the same grave with his own clasped book of magic, and that a Greek epigram was written on him by my illustrious friend George Buchanan of Edinburgh, preceptor to King James, which runs thus" — and here old Cyriacus repeated the well-known lines.

"It sounds well, pastor; it savours of merit in the very tingle of the words; but how may it go in a translation, I prithee?"

"Why, somewhat as this,

'Oh, Scot! thou art a Scot in Scotland.'

The rest has escaped my memory."

"What you recollect is rather against my argument though, good pastor, for the Scotus I speak of is an Italian; though in regard to the magic, the grey cat, and the broomstick, I think it likely to be the same — Is'nt it, Ulrick?"

"And what then may be the age of him you speak of so wildly, if, worthy baron, you will pardon the phrase?"

"Why, the Abbot of St. Kennett computed it to be about 320, according to the Italian's own showing."

"Loose authority, baron — those rich dignitaries of idolatry reckon nothing rightly but their own odious exactions. Methinks the abbot has counted wrong. Since the days of the

patriarchs such tenure of life has not been given to man, though Paracelsus boasts he could make a man live four hundred years, if he might bring him up from his birth, and diet him as he list; but then, baron, he should abstain from riotous living, surfeiture, and strong wines. But let all that pass! Your new acquaintance must be an extraordinary person. Whence comes he?"

"From the clouds, it may be, or more likely from of another direction," said the baron significantly, downwards; "only he could scarce have got either in or hell his gold-covered chariot, and his splendid jewelled ring, the very counterpart, Duchess Anne, of one I saw with your uncle the great Elector Maurice, when myself and George Mansfelt, Countess Agnes's father and my right good friend"——

At this instant two servants brought in the lighted tapers; and, as their reflection fell on the duchess, she looked as motionless and ghastly as though she had died without a struggle, and still sat corpse-like on her chair.

The alarm, the confusion, the cold water and cordials, the exclamations and the prayers—all that is usual on such occasions was not wanting on this. But of all the persons present Agnes alone had a true notion of the duchess's ailment, and she only therefore could suggest the fitting remedy. She had no doubt that the wonderful personage who had so addled Baron Conrad was identical with him whose tyranny had so subdued her friend. She knew that repose and immediate removal to her apartment, where no obstacle would prevent the free utterance of her feelings, was the only course to be pursued towards her recovery. She therefore, by every possible persuasion, strove to snatch her from the torturing kindness by which she was on all hands assailed. But the baron and baroness, and their warm-hearted daughters, were not to be shaken off—old Spangenberg alone comprehending and seconding the arguments of Agnes.

At length the duchess began to recover herself sufficiently to act on these suggestions. She rose from her seat; and, taking Agnes's arm, she motioned towards the door, thus expressing her wish to retire. The rest made way; the baron exclaiming,

"Good, good! all is right again! So, so! 'twas this wild talk about monks and magic, and such wild devilry, that

frightened our fair and noble guest. So, so, cheer up, dear duchess. Pastor Spangenberg will say a short prayer or two by and by, to purify the house of such evil subjects as we talked of erewhile. A nightlamp shall remain in your sleeping-room. The girls shall relieve each other at your bed-side. My nephew here and myself will watch by turns in your ante-room till cock-crow, and to-morrow all will be well again. For the elector has honoured me and my poor mansion by inviting —
— if to supper, with my friend Nuenar and Count Scotus —
— f, who, be he what he may, has tricks and turns at his fingers' ends, that would raise the sick from the very death-couch, and lay the liveliest ghost that ever"——

Ere the sentence was finished, the duchess, wholly overcome, sank faintly on the floor. She was carried senseless to her bed ; and when she came to herself again, she found Agnes and Freda watching over her, and applying various means of recovery. The baron, the old chaplain, and most of the household, were watching at the door. Emma was mixing up, by her mother's direction, and from her private store of drugs, a cordial dose which she pronounced infallible in cases of heart-sickness or nervous affection. But the baron gave his advice for "a possett of good muscadine, with nutmeg, ginger, and other spices, as worth all the prescriptions of the doctors, from Galen down to Simon Hartzbraten, who had dosed and did little good to the family, for the last two dozen years and more."

Agnes, judging her friend's anxiety for an uninterrupted conference, requested Freda to retire and leave the duchess entirely to her care. She confidently expected that the latter would back this by strenuous and decisive words. What then was her surprise to find her, on the contrary, express the greatest reluctance to be left alone with Agnes, whom she entreated, in terms the most affectionate, but most decisive, to leave her to herself, and to the sole care of her waiting gentlewoman ? After seeing that she was quite recovered and settled for the night, Agnes consequently retired, wondering not a little at the sudden and apparently capricious change, which, however, she forbore to qualify by any harsher epithet.

CHAPTER VII.

It was now evident that terror, at the very mention of her oppressor's name and his probable appearance in the same house with her, had frustrated all Duchess Anne's resolution, and totally checked the progress, of her intended revelations to Agnes. As we do not wish to keep our readers in the state of suspense to which our heroine was thus forced, we will impress them with any exaggerated notions relative to the secret of the unhappy duchess, we will briefly state the circumstances of her intercourse with Scotus, and the matter which so particularly weighed on her mind.

Enough has been explained, from her own lips, of the unholy mastery he had obtained over her ; and her character accounting for the facility of his conquest, may have in some measure betrayed itself already. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg possessed, with many qualities highly amiable, and with a considerable share of talent, that curious but not uncommon failing of sensitive women, which gives them a positive pride in a weakness even greater than is usual to their sex.

The wilful submission to some tyranny as a title to compassion, or the wish for misfortunes merely to have the privilege of proclaiming oneself unhappy, seem inconceivable failings of the female mind. Yet we find them at times exert a powerful influence, preventing some from breaking away from their misery, and prompting others to provoke and exaggerate their distresses.

It would be scarcely fair to rank the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg in a class of beings so pitiable. She was deeply tinged with the morbid vanity which is the base of such weakness. But she had too much pride to admit of its taking possession altogether of her character ; and had not the superstition of the age led her to believe firmly in the supernatural power of Scotus, she had never yielded to his despotism.

The machinations by which this practised impostor worked on her may be easily imagined, when her helpless situation and her ardent disposition are recollected. The duke, her husband, volatile and dissipated, was glad to leave her as much as possible to herself, and the society of this new

acquaintance, and to escape from the monotony of reproachful tenderness with which she ever received him. But his early affection at times brought him back, as fond and ardent as ever ; while his ample reliance on her honour left him at all times secure for his own.

The designs of the Italian adventurer were manifold. But he soon saw that his best chance of success was in regard to those which had reference to pecuniary gain. He at least l to prosecute them first, as most likely to lead to those kept in reserve. He calculated that if he could once involve his intended victim in some grand scheme of money embarrassment, he would have her completely in his power for all purposes. He therefore turned all his efforts towards that point. He had previously exhausted the scanty stores of the duke, whose great expenses, in an extravagant establishment and carousings of enormous cost, together with his profuse expenditure for scientific schemes, left him but little to be swindled of. The duchess herself had still less at command ; for a generous disposition kept her always poor as to mere money. But she was rich in the possession of most magnificent jewels. Few princesses of her time, of higher rank even, were so abundantly supplied with those splendid ornaments, to which the extravagance of fashion in those times gave an importance even beyond their intrinsic value. It was just at this period that Elizabeth of England was issuing sumptuary laws, to restrain a profusion in her nobility which sovereign princes wished to limit to themselves. Those of Germany often exhibited on their persons as much as two or three times the worth of their yearly revenues ; hoping by those displays to dazzle the eyes of their subjects, if they could not altogether blind them to the comparative insignificance of their rulers. Anne of Saxony, though the youngest, was also the favourite daughter of her parents ; and from them, as well as her uncle Maurice, she had received numerous jewels, besides the presents lavished on her by her husband and his family, on her marriage and afterwards. It was on those accumulated stores that the mercenary eyes of Scotus were fixed, and for the obtaining of which every other as bad, but not as base, design was put in abeyance.

We must not stop whatever interest our tale may possess, by dwelling on anterior circumstances, the result of which is

already known to our readers. Scotus obtained possession of the jewels ; having first completely subdued the mind of their too credulous owner, to the belief in his integrity as well as the conviction of his power. He had succeeded in persuading her that for the furtherance of his project to bring back the wandering affections of her husband some inestimable and almost unpurchasable accessories were required, to obtain which a sum of money was wanting quite beyond his command ; and she had no fund on which to draw for it. Many attempts already made to effect the purpose she had so much at heart, and with such varied and altogether such imperfect success, had so involved her in the Italian's plans, and so instigated her to persist to the final accomplishment of her hopes, that she could not retreat, even if she would, without incurring his reproaches or exciting his revenge. In the early parts of their intercourse he had insinuated himself completely into her admiration and good opinion. As it advanced he had entirely succeeded in making himself an object of dread. She looked on him at length as a being of superior power ; and capable of any means for its exertion — as a sort of malignant genius, by whose agency a good object may be effected, and whose wickedness would stop at nothing for the attainment of a bad one.

But before she obtained this conviction, the most fatal step of her intercourse with this her evil genius had been taken. Under pretext of examining the jewels and selecting a portion of them, to be placed in the hands of her relative the Margrave of Anspach, as security for a secret loan, Scotus had obtained possession of the whole ; and no sooner had he secured them than he at once threw off the mask, and avowed his intention of making use of some of them for his own purposes, and keeping the rest as a pledge for her secrecy and discretion. In the mean time persisting that he had the power of bringing back the duke to his allegiance, and promising that he would complete that object, besides securing to her a harvest of some mystical and indescribable happiness, of the nature of which he said she was not yet capable of forming a notion.

A moment's reflection told the unfortunate duchess that she was completely in this wretch's power. During the process of his various spells and incantations, he had from time to time obtained from her sundry personal tokens, such as locks of her

hair, trinkets containing amulets and love charms and some signatures of her name, on scraps of paper to which the expert juggler had appended sentences in resemblance of her writing, and conveying sentiments of most criminal tendency. These he without hesitation assured her he would produce, in confirmation of a direct accusation against her conjugal fidelity, did she dare to reveal the fact of his being the possessor of the jewels ; and to conceal his iniquity, he made her consent to a fabricated story of their being stolen. To give a better appearance of probability to the tale, Scotus took every measure that ingenious villany could devise ; he made openings in the windows and door-panels of the apartment where the jewels were usually deposited, left foot-prints on the floors and traces in the garden, where forcible entry was supposed to have been affected, taking care to have those of a size different to his own feet ; fixed a ladder against the garden wall, and finally he placed one or two of the empty caskets on the line of probable flight, which the imagined robber might most naturally have taken.

Grievous was the regret with which the unfortunate duchess found herself entangled in such a web of deceit and danger. But compromised and committed as she was, she knew not what to do ; and felt escape to be utterly hopeless. She was buoyed up, also, by the belief that after all she should be made happy by the very machinations which now caused her such misery. As to the real and right course to be pursued—a full confession to her husband and an exposurc of the wretch who had so worked on her for her own dishonour—she dared not harbour the thought. Dread of the duke's anger, of the Italian's vengeance, of public disgrace, all kept her silent ; and mixed with all there was that infatuated expectation of ultimate good, which, had her mind been left in its own beautiful purity, she had known to be incompatible with such base means.

The fabricated details of the robbery were sent abroad and believed. Suspicion never fell on the real culprit, or on his hapless associate. So far it might be supposed all went well. But it was then, in fact, that her anguish of mind began ; for among the many objects on whom calumny endeavoured to fix the stigma of infamy the duke her husband was himself included ! His extravagance and his debts were the pretences

on which the daring insinuations were based ; and the original propagator of this monstrous slander was, as our readers will readily believe, Scotus the Italian. But those who were not in the secret of his infamy in vain endeavoured to trace the author ; several persons being, however, most ready to propagate the vile invention.

It was the fate of Anne of Saxony, like almost every other princess who marries out of her own immediate country, to be followed to that of her husband by several household sycophants, who invariably endeavoured to breed discord in the mind of their mistress, magnifying the demerits of her adopted home, decrying whatever is good ; and when, as in her case, the wife happens to be of a more elevated family or haughtier lineage than the sovereign she is mated with, instilling on every possible occasion disparaging comparisons between what was her's by the chance of birth and that which she has chosen. Few princesses have the good sense to perceive what a bad compliment is concealed under this flattery ; and there was certainly much in the situation of the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg to excuse her for not forming an exception. But, when emboldened by her facility in permitting such liberties as those, one or two sneaking dependents dared to insinuate their belief in the calumny against her husband's honour, her indignant refutation was proportioned to her knowledge of his innocence. Even had she not had such fatal proof of the latter in her own consciousness, she had as certainly repelled the outrageous supposition. And no answer could be ventured to her solemnly-urged questions—“ How could a prince, a knight, a gentleman, stoop to so vile an act ? — or how could it be necessary for *him*, who had only to express a want, to hint a wish, and all that was her's on earth, not merely ornamental baubles, but the minutest necessities of life, had been laid at his feet ? ”

Even those who believed the monstrous calumny were struck dumb by this reasoning. But it was soon turned into a new subject of praise to the conscience-stricken utterer, who was lauded still higher than ever for her imputed magnanimous forbearance ; while she, who could by one sentence have confessed and established the truth, dared not open her lips. It was then no wonder that she was miserable, nor were her expressions of mental anguish exaggerated. Few

things are more distressing to an ingenuous mind than the necessity of submitting to undeserved praise ; and when it is at the expense of another's innocence and honour, it must be excruciating.

Unable longer to bear the sight of her husband, of her tyrant, or of the scene of transactions which so sunk her in her own respect, the duchess at last resolved to remove for awhile from Coburg. She availed herself of the opportunity afforded by the Conference of Cologne, to which the idle, the dissipated, or, it might be, as in her own case, the unhappy, were flocking from many parts of Germany, in search of pleasure. Obtaining the ready permission of the duke, she resolved to invite herself, as has been told, for a few weeks' visit to Baron Von Kriechlingen, the old friend of her family, whose daughters had been long known to her as children ; but the facility thus given of meeting again, in uncontrolled intercourse, her beloved and confidential friend Agnes de Mansfelt was the chief inducement with the duchess. She wrote her such a letter as could not fail being answered in person. And it was accompanied by the invitation which Duchess Anne had solicited for her friend from the baron's family, and which they, as Agnes's relatives, were delighted to send to her.

But another consent was required before those projects were put in execution ; and it was with the terror of a slave soliciting a boon from his taskmaster that the duchess requested it from Scotus. He readily granted his sanction, for her plan precisely tallied with his own. Having secured the means of appearing at Cologne, in the style which would, as he had good reason to believe, be the best passport to the notice of the elector, he had a double motive in approving of the duchess taking the same destination. He thus secured her against the chance of any betrayal of their joint secret, to which conscience or accident might lead her were he away ; and he was not sorry to have such a fear-fettered instrument as she, to aid in whatever design might spring up during his expedition. And among the half-formed projects in which he indulged were some connected with that incomparable being, whose beauty, virtue, and talent, was the never-ceasing theme of her scarce too partial friend's eulogiums. Thus Scotus knew Agnes before he saw her even ; and the impression he so accurately observed her personal charms to have made on the elector,

during the period in which they both saw her for the first time, determined him to obtain her, if possible, as an auxiliary in his schemes, on her susceptible admirer.

As soon as Scotus was assured of Duchess Anne's arrangements, he set out from Coburg; and he found at Hamburg many lapidaries and moneyers—as speculating capitalists were then called—to facilitate the conversion of a portion of his ill-gotten treasure into cash. Purchases of various kinds; horses, carriages, and apparel, were quickly made; and a coach hired, proportioned to a rank much more elevated than assumed by the adventurer, who now dubbed himself count, and took airs that would have been unbecoming in a prince. He had soon insinuated himself into the good graces of the commercial world of Hamburg. Where gain was the chief object of men's lives, he who had wealth was sure of respect, or what passed for such. But is this reproach only due to the Hamburg moneyers of the sixteenth century? How many puritanical pretenders to-day seek out, associate with, and fawn to, the basest and meanest of mankind, whose means allow them to pander to the appetites of those sordid sycophants who at once feed on and despise them?

The next move in the great game now played by Scotus brought him to Cologne. His progress there has been related. The effect produced on the duchess by the written announcement of his arrival, by her passing view of him in the procession, and the threatened certainty of his appearance in the very house, which was no longer one of refuge from his presence or of relief against her wretchedness, have been also told. And we so conclude this retrospective episode in the drama, of which, after all, these were not alone the chief actors.

While the duchess lay in all the tortures of solitude, and her friends either watched over or lamented her situation, and the domestics of the establishment were running to and fro in various directions, and the whole of Kriechlingen House was in confusion, old Karl Kreutzer sat in the well-stuffed comfort of his large leathern chair, close to the iron stove of his lodge, and in an atmosphere that would have suffocated any less salamandrine personage than a German house-porter.

It has often struck us as a question of curious speculation—how did the good folks of Germany contrive to kill

thought before the introduction of tobacco and the invention of pipes taught men to smother it and smoke-dry their own intellects, after the present fashion? It is a problem now hard to be solved. But we must only hope, for the honour of the olden time, that modern dulness was a parallel importation with that of "the Virginian weed," and that there was vivacity and vigour, of mind and body both, ere our King James blew his "counterblaste" against that "precious stinke, harmful to the nose, harmful to the brain, hurtful to the lungs, and in the black fumes thereof nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless." *

Karl Kreutzer was, however, as stupid an individual as one might meet even in the porter's lodge of a German baron to-day; only alive, but that keenly enough, on the one particular point of his own interest. And while he now sat ruminating on the events of the last twelve hours, he mentally cast up, as was his wont, the debtor and creditor of his day's account, and strove at last to strike a balance.

"So!" soliloquised he—"so! The day is wellnigh over—the evening has set in—and night is fast coming on. Good! and what has this new day done for Karl Kreutzer? I am some fifteen hours older than I was when I rose with the sun. How much the wiser or the richer am I at his down-going? Two golden ducats for vails, besides what I may reckon on from this young duchess for carrying her the letter. Got wot what it was worth! but the messenger who bare it—and she was a wondrous wild one—gave me cause to hold it as a missive of high price, if so be it the happiness of this fair lady was dependant thereon. But what matters that to me? Is it my place to pry into the secrets of the house—masters or visitors, servants or followers? no, no; a wise porter has always an open hand for what comes in, and a closed eye for what passes out—and easy it is to pass at *his* blind side, who can blink right or left as occasion requires. Is it my concern, forsooth! if the groom of the chambers steals forth at night, and returns with a gentle tap at the window by day-break? am I to ask whence comes it? as he puts a broad silver piece on my palm with his right hand, and places the finger of his left on his closed lips, as much as to

* King James's Works — "A Counterblaste to Tobacco."

• say mum ! Would that be becoming ? Or if a veiled lady enters softly at night, and trips up the back stairs towards the young chaplain's attic, would it be gallant or civil to say aback ! when I know she will come stealthily down here cock-crow, and his reverence by her side, to give her a blessing as she passes the gate, and me a guilder or two as I cautiously draw the bolt behind her ? Am I, Karl Kreutzer, a censor of morals to wicked Cologne ? alas and alack ! I should have a hard task of it. And if the kitchen-boy carries out the mangle-panniers as heavy as the cook sends them in, is it my place to look under the covers and count fragments—or am I to ask if the flasks be full or empty which the cellar-man takes forth in his broad breeches-pockets—or refuse the cold pastry, or pot of conserves, or the choppine of Rhenish, or bottle of Malvoisie, which my fellow-servants drop in the lodge as they pass by in token of old kindness ? Is a porter a thief-catcher, or an informer, or a spy ? *Gott bewahre !* If he turn such a meddler and make-mischief, my branch of the Christmas tree would run small risk of breaking down !* What is it to me if the young baron Ulrick slips into the courtyard and lingers in the garden, after he has taken leave at night and is believed by his uncle and aunt to be safe in his college at Bonn ; while Fraulein Freda, Heaven bless her ! steals out to keep him company, albeit her worthy parents, my good masters, fancy her listening to Pastor Scragglekopft's lecture at the congregation's church hard by ? Would it be meet for me, who winked at the wild doings of her father in his early days, to thwart the innocent pleasures of the daughter now that he is old ?—Who goes there ? who draws the postern bolt ?”

“ It is only I, good Karl, going forth in haste for drugs to the pharmacy in the Kirchgasse for the sick lady above,” said the outgoer, one of the varlets, so despatched by orders of the baroness, for some medicament of which her store was deficient ; and taking advantage of the errand to carry off some of the day's spoils, for sale at a not distant tavern.

“ And a marvellous slow gait dost thou go at, honest Simon,” said Karl, half aloud. “ He who halts on his road to the doctor hurries on his way to the fiend, saith the proverb

* Old Karl here alluded to the German custom which still exists—most amiably—of hanging presents of various kinds on branches cut from the tops of young fir-trees, which are lighted up and decorated in a very tasteful fashion, in every house, from palace to cottage, on Christmas eve.

—and methinks that large bundle under thy cloak is a sort of passport for thy safe journey! But never mind! It is no matter of mine!

‘ When the thief creepeth,
The watchman sleepeth,

as the old rhyme has it. And God’s mercy! let him who is paid for it look to it, as the saying is. No! never be it told of Karl Kreutzer that he peached against his fellows. Thirty years and more have I sat in this lodge, and never wronged my masters myself, nor meddled with those who did. *Gott im Himmel!* I can sleep with a clear conscience.”

With these words, Karl betook himself again to his easy chair, which a keener perception of right and wrong might have perhaps made an uneasy one. But he was of that class of men who deceive themselves with as little remorse as they cheat others, or let them be cheated, when their own interest is at stake.

Scarcely had the porter begun to doze, when he was aroused by a gentle tap at the street casement close to the postern, such as he had alluded to erewhile as the return signal of the truant groom of the chambers, as well as others of the household night wanderers.

“Who’s there?” briskly cried Karl, without stirring from his seat or moving limb or muscle; long habit having accustomed him to sleep, as it were, like a hare, with his eyes open, and to call out instinctively at the slightest sound.

“Come hither, kind master Karl!” said a voice at the window.

“Ay, ay, it is ever thus—kind master Karl, good master Karl, honest master Karl, whenever they have anything to ask for. But when otherwise, this honest, good, kind gossip of their’s is only a surly, churlish, dogged old fellow. And were I but to lose my place—what would it be then?”

“Good Karl, it is me—open the gate!”

“And who the fiend are you?” said the old man, grumbling as he left his seat and moved towards the window. “You forsooth! I am expected to know every one, am I? Here it was only this forenoon that an ill-favoured varlet I never before clapped eyes upon called out that he was my friend Caspar Schott—while a ragged-skirted wench, as

strange-faced as impudent, would have thrust her squalling child into my lodge for old acquaintance sake ! and another——”

“Master Karl !” said the voice, and a gentle tap accompanied the call.

“Well, well, I’m coming a’nt I ? Walk in and tell your business, be ye whom ye may,” exclaimed the testy Cerberus, drawing the cord that raised the spring-latch of the postern, and looking at the same time, like a trusty sentinel, at one-paned window, to mark if the new comer was one who might or might not pass at his *blind* side. But when he caught a full view of the old woman who had so bribed and so frightened him in the morning, he started back a pace or two, and his knees knocked together as she stepped into the lodge and closed the door behind her.

“Kind master Karl, I told you we should meet again,” said she, unceremoniously seating herself (in a very unfeminine posture as Karl thought) on a low stool beside the stove.

“Sit down in your chair,” continued she ; and Karl obeyed mechanically, albeit unused to have the honours of his stronghold done by another.

“And now that you are seated again on your throne like a king, let me look at your palm that I may see what good will betide ye to-night.”

Karl had a particular horror of chiromancy and all sorts of fortune-telling, ever since an old witch had prophesied in his boyhood that he would live a bachelor and die a beggar. The first part of the prophecy he had been ever afraid to believe, and the latter was a subject of perpetual dread and growing aversion. Nothing but his expectation of gain from the visit of the old woman could have induced him to hold forth his open hand ; and while he did so, he said in a plaintive tone, —

“Good dame, speak no ill of me or my fortune. I hate to hear bad news, all king as you would christen me—ay, as much as the monarch of France himself ; and they say King Henry has just put down the Paris almanacs, rather than suffer their predictions to go abroad—and a good example it is for the world. Deal gently with my hand-lines and lineaments, kind mother ! Don’t tell me that I am to be hanged or drowned—I like not to look forward on a violent end ; and howbeit I must die in poverty, let it be at least on a pallet of clean straw. There !”

And with the concluding word he stretched forth his hand, turning aside his head the while, as though he had been holding out his limb for amputation. Nor could the first cut of the surgeon's knife have caused a more sudden start to a nervous patient than did the slap on the open palm given to Karl Kreutzer by that of his companion produce in him.

"There!" exclaimed the operator, echoing the porter's word, "hold your fist now firm shut, and good luck will be sure to come to it."

Karl religiously performed this bidding, though his nerves tingled with pain from fingers' point to elbow; and he stared without speaking a word, as the old woman went on.

"Well, Karl, you did your business like a good messenger this morning. The drug worked well."

The drug! *Gott bewahre!* I gave no drug — I deny it — I call the town council and his highness the elector to witness, if she dies by foul means, it is none of my doing," cried the terrified porter, the dread of being even by implication a poisoner overcoming all other fear; and as he spoke he attempted to rise, but he was held fast by a strong grasp, his hand opening in the struggle, and two double ducatoons, with a small billet in the form of that he had delivered in the morning, falling on the floor.

"See, see, man, what a shower of good things falls from your own hands. What are you scared at? Drug is but a mystical word that means letter in plain speech; so take up your money, and that other gentle missive, and let both go quickly the same road as the last."

"Oh, if so, all is right—good! good!" said the porter, ever convinced by the explanation that was accompanied by a fee. "I am willing, worthy dame, to do the service that is so nobly requited, but I must protest against false alarms. I am easily shaken by the fear of foul play, and the duchess being so fearfully ill——"

"What do you say? —ill?" cried the old woman, grasping the porter's arm.

"Ay, by my soul, good dame, and if they speak truly through the mansion, grievously ill. I hope, I hope, dame, nought of evil was conveyed in that silk-bound scented billet — no poisonous perfumes, no unction, that touching the skin takes the life — no——"

"Hush, master porter, hush! Do you not hear a tap at your street window?"

"Body o' me! yes. You have a keen ear for a signal tap, good dame, to hear it before Karl Kreutzer!"

While the porter spoke, his companion sprang from her stool with great agility, and hid herself behind a curtain, which hung across the alcove that contained the functionary's bed. In the mean time Karl pulled his string, opened the postern, and gave admittance to a man wrapped in a dark mantle.

"Save you, master porter!" said he, with an unbending air, and at the same time keeping his face closely concealed. "These are busy times; you have several strangers in the house, have you not?"

"Many more than I wish for, and some that might be well spared—no offence, sir stranger," replied Karl. "And what may it be that brings you to swell the number?"

"We are alone, good fellow?" asked the other, in an authoritative tone. Karl, wishing to meet this by his usual self-important style, and at the same time held doubly in check by the stranger's haughty deportment and the fear of his discovering the secrets of the alcove, replied to one question by a few others.

"Do you see any one else here? Have you ever heard that I was a married man? Do you suspect me of concealing a listener behind the curtain to catch every stray idler that chooses to come and pump me for news?"

"No offence, no offence, master porter; it is only that I wished just to obtain your good offices with regard to one of the lady visitors who now abide here."

"Why, as for that, my master, I am never unwilling to do a good turn (as there are those not far off who could testify) when the fair sex is concerned; howbeit I have ever kept clear of them on my own score—but there may be a fate in that," said Karl, softened by the chance of a coming *douceur*; "and as I always consider——"

"So, so! enough, enough! wilt thou then undertake to deliver this secretly to——What means thy grinning? Off hands, fellow!" said the stranger, stepping back, his sentence broken, and his temper, it would seem, somewhat ruffled, by the imperfect winks which Karl dared not bring decidedly to bear on the alcove, and by the downward pluck he gave to the

stranger's mantle, as the latter thought with a design of uncovering his face.

"Fellow! off hands! *potz tausend!* Is it thus a favour is to be required? Is that language from him who asks to him who is expected to grant? *Gott im Himmel!* but the world is turning round, and the wrong way, methinks! Moreover, this is no time to send missives to a lady who is sore sick.—Better come to-morrow; no one may now approach the duchess Anne; better come to-morrow."

Of this speech of the porter, the angry parts were all affected, and the latter prompted by a wish to keep the communication, which he took it for granted was for the duchess, free from the reach of the old woman. He was too stupid to recollect that there was another strange lady in the house.

"Verily, my honest fellow, thou art wroth with little reason, and thy ire o'ermasters thy wit. I meant not any offence—nor is this missive intended for the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg. I would confide it to thee to be delivered to Countess Agnes de Mansfelt. Wilt thou take charge of it?"

"O ho! The Countess Agnes! oh, that is a very different affair. Ay, marry, that I will, for she seems a kind-hearted lady. She smiled like an angel when I went up to the balcony to-day with the letter for—hem! hem! When I went up to the gallery——"

"Well, well! all that is unimportant now. Take means to place this in the young countess's hands by noon to-morrow, and you will do me a favour, and yourself no disservice. Let this be the token!"

With these words the stranger slipped a piece of money into the porter's hand, and, with a hasty and haughty adieu, he disappeared.

"Good night! Sleep well!" said Karl, as the postern closed; and, ere he could turn round towards the alcove, its secret tenant had nimbly darted from it, and snatched the letter from his hand.

"Hold, dame, hold! or rather, let me say, let loose your hold—That fair missive——"

"Peace, fool, peace!" exclaimed the other, stamping his foot—ay, *his!* But our readers have already detected the sex of this mysterious person. And poor Karl Kreutzer could no longer be deceived in it, as he looked gaping on his com-

panion, whose tall figure, springing up suddenly from his former stooping posture, appeared, in its female drapery, gigantic ; whose voice sounded like the explosion of a falconet ; and the grasp of whose hand seemed to have crushed the sinews and muscles of the electrified porter's arm.

The keen eye of the stranger darted in an instant into the folds of the paper, which he held up to the lamp that burned on the table ; and he saw its contents with a glance. He then placed it in Karl's hand ; and uttering, in a most impressive tone, an injunction to deliver both missives with the greatest care and speed, he tucked up his attire in the compactest manner, darted through the postern, and disappeared in a twinkling, baffling the rapid movement of old Karl's thrust-out head and the search of his peering eyes.

"*Herr Jesus !*" muttered the latter, as he withdrew into his den, " well might Pastor Scragglekopft say in his discourse, 'fore yesterday, that intrigue and mystery would spread their dark mantle over Cologne, and the devil hold fast the corners during the conference. It is come to pass, it is come to pass ! The holy man spoke the words of truth—and now let every one look to his own. Then what can this new secret be concerning the young countess above ? It feels heavier than a mere missive or a copy of love lines sent by some crazy poet for a compliment. Let me see, but first let me look at the fee—the *viaticum*, as the chaplain laughingly calls his little present to pay the travelling expenses, of these adventuring letters. It felt very like a guilder—but that strapping masquerader took the power of touch out of my fingers by his rude grasp. What ! a broad doubloon ! *Gott im Himmel !* but I thought he was a brave gallant, that proud-spoken cloak-wrapped messenger. Now for a peep into his—who's there again ? In the name of all the fiends, who's there ? Is there to be no peace for me to-night ? Who's there, I say ? "

" Open, Karl ! open quickly ! I'm out of breath with running from the pharmacy—open, open ! " cried the servant outside, knocking loudly on the postern the while.

" Running from the pharmacy ! running from the taverners, lying knave ! " muttered Karl, as he leisurely pulled the bolt-string, having first placed the two letters in a strong box, for after examination. " Ah, is it you, honest Simon ? " continued

he, as the varlet entered ; “ how those lazy apothekes keep folk waiting.”

“ Ay, that they do, Karl—is the duchess no worse for the delay ? ” asked the breathless man, passing in speed towards the staircase.

“ What know I of duchesses, you dog ? Up, up stairs with your drugs. If she is the worse for tarrying, ten to one she will be little the better for taking. Ah, *Gott im Himmel!* may I be saved from the two great curses of life—fortune-telling and physic ! But Heaven preserve this duchess meanwhile—she has, as yet, been no thorn in the side of honest Karl Kreutzer ; ” and so muttering into the broad end, as it might be said, of his own trumpet, this gentle note of self-praise and selfishness died away, without even an echo for the ear of the world. How many a more important individual than the old porter is this moment, even while we write, silently breathing out a somewhat similar tribute to the omnipotence of egotism !

Just at the time that old Karl Kreutzer was murmuring this illustration of the universal principle, the Elector-archbishop of Cologne was throwing off a dark cloak, with the aid of Walram his faithful valet, in that private cabinet in which he had held the interview with Count Nuenar.

“ Thou art sure, Walram,” said he, “ that none observed me going out, nor as I entered by the private way ? ”

“ None, your highness. I watched carefully, and led off one or two stragglers of the household who lingered in the west corridor—none others were in the way of observation.”

“ Right, Walram, thou hast done well—give me a sober suit of black now, I must visit the nuncio to-night. Say not that I have been abroad—thou knowest I do not wish——”

“ To have your highness’s private charities pried into—I know it well.”

“ Ah ! Walram,” said the elector, smiling, “ thou art the best of confidants. Thou wouldst persuade me that thou knowest not my secret doings, and conceal even from thyself what I confide to thee. Thou, at least, wilt never betray me, Walram ? ”

“ Good, your highness, I have nought to betray—I know nothing of your highness that might not be told to the town council, and lauded by Johan Hilpaert, your worst enemy.”

"Go to, Walram—you flatter *too* well," continued the elector, as he pursued the operation of the toilette. "So! this grave attire is good for to-night; but for to-morrow's dinner, Walram, my last new suit of purple and gold, and all my rings—all my orders—remember, Walram, all."

"Yes, your highness."

"Thou knowest the whole conference feasts with me—and neither proud d'Arschot, nor vain-glorious Terranova, must even approach me in splendour!"

To these last words, uttered but half aloud, and even that unconsciously, the prudent confidant made no reply.

"All shall be ready, your highness. And for supper at Baron Von Kriechlingen's, how will it please your highness to be dressed?"

"How? as at dinner, to be sure,—in my most proud display!"

"Your highness—if I dare-remind you of it, said 'twas a private supper-party."

"And so it is, Walram—so private that I would not have my going bruited much abroad. But nevertheless, I would appear at it in a blaze of splendour. Yes! she shall see me as Semele saw Jove, but not be consumed like her!"

"Your highness?" said the valet, stepping close to his lord, curiosity overcoming for a moment his previous caution.

"I spoke not—or if I did 'twas not for thee, good Walram. Has Count Scotus taken possession of his apartment?"

"He has, your highness, an hour gone."

"I will visit him there," said the elector, waving his hand as he left the cabinet, and went into a narrow passage leading to the apartment allotted to the Italian's use, which opened out upon a terrace in the extensive gardens of the palace.

"He might as well have spoken it outright at once—I shall soon know the secret, be it what it may," thought Walram, as his lord disappeared. "But do I not see already that a new amour lifts him up thus above his usual bearing? And shall I quarrel with that? no, no, the flood-gates of generosity are ever open when a rich man falls in love—and he who stands close by, as I do in this case, has only to hold forth his nets to have them filled!"

During this pithy soliloquy, the elector had reached his guest's apartment; and entering, without any form of state

approach, he found him sitting in a loose robe, with books and papers spread on a table before him; while his secretary assisted in their arrangement, and a couple of valets were busied in the disposal of various rich articles of dress in the wardrobes around.

After a few complimentary words exchanged between the assiduous host and the well-pleased guest, the secretary and valets having respectfully quitted the room—the elector's eye was caught by an enamelled miniature which lay on the table. He felt the deep blush which suffused his face, as he started in astonishment.

"Does your highness think it like!" said Scotus, carelessly.

"Count," replied the elector, in a tone between embarrassment and sternness, "this is a strange coincidence!"

A rapid suspicion darted across his mind. Could the fair being who had so fixed his thoughts have conspired with this Italian to lead him into an intrigue?

"Strange! That your highness should find a friend willing and able to outstrip your wishes? Take the picture and wear it—a lock of her glossy hair is within the enamelled cover."

"Do you know Countess Agnes de Mansfelt?" asked the elector, fixing a keen glance on Scotus.

"As your highness does—I saw her in the balcony to-day, for the first and only time."

"Then let me ask—and answer me fairly and frankly, count—how comes it that you have divined my thoughts? How, that this lovely portrait of a lovelier model lies ready to meet—to fascinate me here?"

"How is it, your highness, that the fair original's thoughts are fixed on you this moment? and that the embroidered heart, pierced with your fond device, is now in her trembling hand?"

"By Heavens! this is too much! There is jugglery in this!" exclaimed the elector, starting back still another step.

"Jugglery means falsehood—Do I speak that or truth?" calmly replied the Italian.

"How know you of that foolish present? How have you this divining power? How is it you thus pierce my secret thoughts and untold actions? Tell me, Count Scotus, for I must be resolved."

"Am I a man to be thus catechised and thus suspected? Were it not better to make my power of use? This is no commonplace amour. Had it been so, a less agency than *mine* might have sufficed."

"Amour! agency! These words are misapplied—I disown the imputation of the one—I require not the other."

"Yet the first is a positive fact—the latter an invincible necessity. Methinks your highness would do well to pause awhile, before you reject clear evidence and predetermined aid."

"Predetermined!"

"Your highness must feel the deep conviction that I am not speaking lightly—and you cannot believe that I am here by mere chance at such a crisis. There is a destiny—"

"I do believe there is—and if I am its sport, you may well be its instrument!" said the elector, solemnly; for he felt one of those sudden impulses of conviction of which minds like his are so susceptible. "Hark ye, Count Scotus," continued he, "you have raised a host of feelings, a crowd of thought, that had no previous existence. You have blown into a flame of wondrous intensity, what was but a mere spark of passing sentiment. I know not how this is—I know not rightly my own feelings, your influence, nor *her* power. I am in a maze of perplexed sensation, and spell-drawn towards the solution of this exciting mystery. Whether it be fate, or my own doing, I know not,—but certes you have discovered or I betrayed the bud of an incipient thought, which ripens fast to full-blown passion. Be it so! I scorn to shrink from aught that may be-tide. I will go forward in this path—and judge at least with my own heart's conviction of the secret workings which hurry me along."

"Your highness shall want no guide while I am with you."

"Good, good! Be it so again! To-morrow night will tell me more of this. Will you, count, give me this—almost too lovely, yet not too flattering effigy?"

"It is your highness's own—look here!" with these words Scotus touched the spring in the back of the miniature; and there, in a lock of Agnes's hair, was evident the initials of her name ingeniously intertwined with those of Ghebbard Truchses, in gold-twisted wire.

"'Tis wondrous strange! said the elector, taking the por-

trait. He gazed on it awhile ; then placed it in his bosom ; and after a few words more, retired.

We need scarcely add that Scotus himself was the old woman who preceded, so fortunately for his own plans, the visit of the elector to Karl Kreutzer's lodge. And it will be as easily divined that the picture of Agnes was obtained among Duchess Anne's precious trinkets ; and that the Italian's ingenious fingers had worked the wire-drawn initials together, in the interval of his retiring from the dinner-party, and his going out at nightfall to leave the second billet for his unfortunate victim. The bustle in the palace, and the passing to and fro of his attendants with luggage, books, &c., allowed him to slip out and return unobserved, by the aid of ready-made master-keys, with which he opened at will the garden-gates, as well as those of the mansion itself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE supper party, so anxiously looked for, took place. The expectations of those who reckoned on it as a kind of touchstone to their hopes and their designs were more than fulfilled. Ghehard Truchses was satisfied that he had found, for the first time in his life, a woman, whose beauty, manners, and mind were all on a par of lofty elegance, yet whose pride was without arrogance, whose vivacity without conceit, and whose modesty without meanness. Thus far one long evening of familiar intercourse enabled our hero unerringly to judge. There was an open dignity on the very surface of Agnes's demeanor, which might be read like an unclasped volume. Truchses did not pretend to divine at once the secret springs of her character. In fact his thoughts did not dive so deeply. Who for the first time in society with the being whose attractions captivate his heart, dreams of fathoming the silent channels of hers ? These are the subjects for after-thought. To imagine an immediate inquest into them is to suppose an influence which no woman excites at first sight, because no man believes himself to be at once in love, and nothing else would justify or even suggest

such profound inquiry. It is when, after repeated meetings, the lover feels himself enthralled, that he commences an examination which reason tells him to be necessary to his future happiness. But then it is too late. His mind has lost its analyzing power. It is imbued with one colour—rose, as it has been fragrantly and fancifully called,—which tinctures every thing, sometimes falsely, but still happily—for much that might check the ardour of a mere admirer, is seen through passion's prism, in self-blending hues of beauty. And, blessed construction of the human mind! this is not merely for man's deception. For the mysterious action of love is double; and while it makes the lover see perfection in defect, it often converts the faults of the beloved one into solid elements for mutual delight—exciting indolence, controlling vanity, and concentrating a thousand vapoury levities into one pure and chrystallized affection. And what unimagined faculties does not love's radiance bring to light! But this is perhaps irrelevant—at least premature.

Ghebbard Truchses had sought this meeting with Agnes de Mansfelt, prepared for its result. His imagination had been highly wrought. He knew he was approaching a rare specimen of female loveliness, and he came like an idolater to the altar of a long-worshipped divinity. He believed besides, or fancied he believed, that an agency more than mortal urged him on. And he was not left in solitude with this inspiring abstraction. Scotus took care that the notion should not evaporate. The night of self-enchantment which Truchses passed alone was followed by a day of artful excitement, on the part of him whose influence he courted rather than repelled. His morning labours with his coadjutors of the conference, his dinner duties with those haughty guests, engaged without occupying his mind, and irritated a spirit impatient of control and impetuous in action. Every hour that brought him nearer to the one he yearned for, was like those which lead a captive to enlargement. And, like him who sees through prison bars the open fields of freedom, he exaggerated the enjoyments from which he was held back—if aught, indeed, *can* over-rate the charms of liberty or the enchantments of love.

Agnes, in her turn, felt the whole force of the impulsions which had hurried on her enthusiastic admirer. His animation, his energy, his brilliant display of dress and ornament,

the flush of excitement in his tone and on his features, his varied knowledge, brought into play through many channels of wit and eloquence, the flattery of his looks and manner, rather than his words, formed a combination that few women would be able, fewer still desirous, to resist. Agnes acknowledged to herself that she had never met a man of such brilliant manners ; yet she was as unconscious of the power of her own attractions in drawing him out, as are the magnet islands of romance, towards which some stately vessel hurries, on wings swifter than those of the wind.

But Agnes was not wholly unprepared for the impressions of this scene. She had heard much of the Elector-archbishop of Cologne. The passing view in which she saw him the previous day, the evident attentions he gave to the group of which she formed one, the allusions of Emma, and the characteristic hints of Ulrick, had all had their effect. His glowing manner now carried her along with him in a rapid flow of animated discourse. He sat by her side at supper ; and when the repast was finished he attached himself to her, as if unconsciously, in the saloon to which the party withdrew. The lead in conversation was ceded to him by all present, in right of his talents rather than his rank, so as to obviate the air of arrogant superiority which is most odious when it seems sanctified by high station. Truchses more than most men blended familiarity with dignity—because he affected it less than most. The happy manner which reaches, without straining for, the level of high breeding, is a gift, a talent that may not be taught, any more than an ear for music or an eye for painting. Our hero had it in perfection. And the consequence was that every one was at ease with him—not because he strove to put them so, but because he made no effort, either for their sake or his own. Nothing is more vain than the labours of the posture-masters of society, whose contortions of condescension completely embarrass those who may be supposed to want their encouragement. It is awkwardness of mind which causes a warped manner ; and no twisting can ever set either straight.

Agnes had seen high society from her childhood up. But in the tone of that semi-chivalrous age there was a rudeness that revolted her ; why, she scarcely knew, for it was an instinct of refinement that raised her above the level of her country's manners. Chivalry was then on the wane. Religious

strife had roused a deeper tone in the mind of Europe, and particularly throughout Germany. War was now waged on more solemn inspirations than those of gallantry ; and champions of "the faith" scorned the suavity of their predecessors. Churchmen and statesmen, on the other hand, were stern in principle and rigid in manners. Agnes's domestic circle formed no exception to the prevalent tone. The ardent elegance of Ghebbard Truchses was, therefore, something new to her ; and as her memory hastily recalled the most distinguished courtiers of Saxony, and the many strangers of note who had appeared there at intervals, she mentally gave the palm to the accomplished personage with whom fate had now thus thrown her into contact.

Agnes de Mansfelt possessed a certain peculiarity of taste, more common with young women than may be obvious to those shallow slanderers, who ascribe to some vitiated or sordid motive whatever may appear an aberration from the beaten track of female commonplace. She had ever preferred the society of men of middle age to that of the youthful dangles of the elector's court. She had observed in those latter pretension overpowering desert, and selfishness stifling decorum, in a degree not to be met with in those who had seen more of the world, and made it a study instead of a sport. With greater information and less levity, she found that the former had more skill in concealing their faults ; and she who had formed no attachment of the heart, knew not as yet the delight of finding excuses for the errors of those one loves.

Such was the fact with regard to Agnes. She had never received any serious impression from her various suitors. Her affections were wholly disengaged. Several circumstances, one of a very peculiar character, had led her to consider herself out of the possible reach of any attachment that might lead to marriage ; and any other never came within the scope of her imagining. Her intercourse with the other sex had, therefore, been at all times free from the restraints which embarrass young women who look to a wedded establishment in life. She was neither afraid of herself nor of the men she so unreservedly listened to ; nor — what is still more terrible to a sensitive and delicate mind — of the voice of scandal misinterpreting her conduct.

This absence of embarrassment is the great charm of women,

when not degenerating into frivolity. The loveliest fail to captivate when evidently acting or studying a part. And, with such a person as Truchses, Agnes's manner was so utterly unrestrained that her various attractions had most ample play. His rank was no cause of reserve to her, who had been ever used to hold herself on a level with princes; and his profession never obtruded itself, but in those passing reflections which made her think it a pity, that one so calculated for every lay blessing should be as much debarred as she considered herself to be from the greatest of all. But this thought never came reflected, as it were, from any image of her own situation. If her destiny was, even in this early stage, blended, either in fancy or reality, with that of Ghebhard Truchses, she was at any rate unconscious of it.

During this memorable evening, Jerome Scotus played but the minor part of an observer. He made himself in no way prominent, except by assiduous efforts to leave the principal personages in the scene as much and as uninterruptedly as possible together. He took care to amuse and occupy the whole family of Kriechlingen, father, daughters, and nephew. His various arts to this effect were closely attended to by Count Nuenar, who watched all that was going on in his usually keen and unimpassioned way. The persons mentioned composed the whole company. The baroness was, as usual, confined to her private apartment, where old Spangenberg kept her company, partook of her frugal repast, and duly read her to sleep, before he retired to his early couch. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg did not appear at either board for supper. Under the excuse of indisposition—for she had in truth recovered from the sudden attack of the previous day—she wholly absented herself, and kept strictly to her own chamber.

It may be supposed that Agnes's curiosity had been greatly excited with respect to Scotus. But it must be remembered that her friend's confidence had only gone the length of a vague and general accusation of him. Agnes was wholly ignorant of his nefarious conduct respecting the jewels; and she could not help making some allowance in his favour (on the score of Duchess Anne's enthusiastic, and consequently exaggerative, turn of mind) when she saw his footing with the elector, and heard such testimonials as were bestowed by the baron, and more particularly by young Leckenstein, on his prodigious

knowledge and various acquirements. His bearing towards herself during the whole evening was such as to weaken in a great measure her previous prejudice against him. Nothing could be more decorous and respectful, and at the same time less fawning or obtrusive. The impression was altogether in his favour. The high consideration in which he was evidently held by the elector was, in spite of her, almost enough to outweigh all that she had heard. But, in fact, she scarcely observed or thought of him at all after the first hour. He seemed but as a shadow, depending on that brilliant substance of talent and accomplishments after which he moved. Little did Agnes know of the exulting joy with which he marked the progress of events. Scotus saw clearly that his game was now in his own hands.

We abstain from entering into a detail of the conversation of that evening. Important as it was, as the opening of a long period of vicissitudes in the career of two gifted individuals, it nevertheless failed to bring out any of those salient emotions of the heart, those gushing springs of sentiment which leap at times through the surface of social intercourse, like the live waters bounding from a mountain's breast. The whole of that evening was like a glow of sunshine, the atoms of which might not be separated from the bright and genial whole. The beings thus brought together were like enchanted creatures, walking in fairy-land, through bloom and fragrance, moved by some soft impulse, scarcely felt and not to be defined. Yet in neither did it produce that languid inanity which sinks to sleep in enjoyment's lap. It awoke in both a feeling of mature delight, which Agnes had not even imagined, and which Truchses had only dreamed of, as some far-distant and apocryphal paradise, the ways of which he was not destined to explore.

A whole month passed on. How many readers will applaud our abstaining from an attempt to trace the minute progress of the passion, the germs of which had been so early developed! We have faintly sketched the dawn of the bright day. But the many-shifting hues that light love's heaven when the sun of passion rushes up defy the boldest pencil, and baffle the keenest gaze. It is enough to state that the impassioned elector was deep, deep in love. Once more! but with sensations wholly different from those of any previous attachment;

so different that this new modification of his ruling passion appeared to him one totally distinct. It must be confessed, that in his frequent amours he had never had other than sensual designs. The monstrous institutions of the church to which he belonged having, in its unequal war against nature, forced the priesthood into libertinism, it chose to slur over the offence rather than obviate the temptation. Truchses felt that love was a necessity of his heart. From its legitimate raptures he was, as a priest, debarred. His station, as a prince, gave unbounded scope to its illicit indulgence. Woman had been to him therefore a pursuit — but never a prey. He was too proud to have recourse to any vulgar influence of power ; too generous to feel concession in any case a triumph. He was at once the most impassioned in suing, and most humble in success. If he was driven out of the path of virtue, he never at least trod that of dishonour ; and he threw a delicacy into intrigue which made it more dangerous than open vice.

Agnes de Mansfelt produced an effect on him which he had never before known. None of the elements of what he had previously believed to be love seemed mixed with his new feelings. He had not to combat any violent desires. He had no war to wage against dishonouring thoughts. Not one rose up in reference to her. He was as though transplanted to an atmosphere pure, calm, warm, and bright, free from extremes and accidental agitation, where an eternal sunshine lighted an undying spring, and serenity was buoyant rather than voluptuous. The days flew rapidly, but not too fast. It is only when we have some object to gain, or some phantom to pursue, that time appears unseasonably rapid. But Truchses' existence now was as an undefined dream. He asked for nothing but to be with Agnes. When with her, he thought of nought besides. When absent from her, he felt as joined to her by some subtle link of sympathy. He could not analyse it. Who could? Yet who has not felt the chain — as light as gossamer, yet stronger than iron fetters?

And so, Ghebbard Truchses was now really in love — and for the first time, at seven-and-thirty years of age ! This may appear a startling assertion after all we have confessed for him. But the glowing fancy of boyhood, commonly called first love, is by no means of necessity *it*. Many such flickering lights usurp the title that belongs only to that steady

flame which may be awakened long after *they* have run their meteor course. Those impetuous fancies of early youth are easily distinguished from *it*. For it is energetic without violence, passionate without coarseness, tender without mawkishness, and confident without audacity. And can he who has felt such a passion, and known the ecstasy of its being returned, ever forget one circumstance of his bliss? No, no! The chilling influences of time and absence may congeal all other feelings. But they preserve, while they strengthen, the one passion shrined in his heart — like the condensed essence unfrozen in the centre of a flask, though surrounded by ice formed of the vine's less ardent elements.

During this first month of Ghebhard Truchses' regeneration, all custom of his former life was in complete abeyance, all notions of business paralysed, all ambition, jealousy, and vain glory dead. The affairs of the congress were totally unheeded; his own concerns unthought of. The intrigues of the former were left to his rivals; the cares of the latter to his friends. Nuenar, Kriechlingen, and some others, laboured hard to uphold him in the estimation of the citizens and the chapter. But he had no one to plead his cause against those envious coadjutors, named by the emperor to negotiate with him in the congress, or to stand his friend against the torrent of plausible complaint consequent on his neglect of the high duties entrusted to his charge. He made one or two efforts to rouse into a watchfulness of the trust he knew himself to be forsaking. But the chicaneries of diplomacy threw him back in disgust; and after awhile he gave up his official responsibilities, even in thought. Every day saw him early at Kriechlingen House. Every night brought him late to his palace. While at the former, it seemed to him as though an angel beamed on him, attended but not rivalled by her three seraph friends. When at home, he had always a domestic devil, feeding with forbidden fruit, and whispering unceasing flatteries into his too ready ear. Scotus never allowed him any respite from the glossing wiles by which he smoothed his path to ruin. To ruin? Was it not the Italian's interest to keep him powerful and great? Patience, good reader!

Of Agnes, her feelings, and her occupations, during this month of exquisite monotony, we have little to record. The chapter of her life had opened at a new page, and fate was about

to write in it in characters acutely legible. But she was a passive agent in her own destiny. She received the elector's visits — not ostensibly paid to her — she walked with him in the garden, she conversed with him in the saloon ; and she sang to him, while he gazed and listened as though sight and hearing formed but one sense ; she watched him while he read, as though her eyes took in the author's meaning more through the eloquent expressions of the reader's features than through the inspiring words which caused their play. And thus the time ran on ; the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and the two sisters playing subordinate parts in the oft-repeated scene, and the former agitated by a host of emotion, growing and shifting from day to day, to a crisis of intensity which, with its causes, will be explained in the proper place.

CHAPTER IX.

MAY was now ripening to maturity, and lending its influence to the growth of all bright things and all good feelings. The sensation which we have just striven to describe came clearly within this latter category, and sudden circumstances soon completed what the regular march of Time would have been long in bringing to pass.

The fine weather and the verdant charms of the open country irresistibly invited abroad those whose sympathy with nature's beauties was increased by the isolation which might be thought to have checked it. For several weeks the female inhabitants of Kriechlingen House had scarcely left the precincts of its gardens. Duchess Anne was restrained to those limits, and even to their infrequent enjoyment, by the mysterious slavery on the tenure of which her existence seemed to hang. Agnes had had no wish to pass them, and her influence on her young hostesses was such as to lead them to yield up to her inclinations for retirement even those tastes which urged so many into the scenes of public entertainment which abounded during the continuance of the congress. But the sisters had other causes, of strictly personal concern, for this temporary seclu-

sion from the busy world. Fredolinda, with too sensitive acuteness, had quickly observed the fascination which the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg involuntarily began to exercise over her cousin Ulrick. Jealousy soon springs up, a weed by the side of love, in the warm heart that is joined with a weak mind ; and when once that fiend creeps into paradise, the fruit of knowledge turns to deadly poison. Poor Freda found the truth of this, in the rapid pang which struck on her so lately happy heart ; and her indolent enthusiasm, thus checked, soon turned to brooding discontent. She made no complaint — sought no consolation — kept her anxiety to herself — and sighed and wept in silence.

Emma, late so unfixed and laughter-loving, had also shown a change of manner, if not quite of character. An air of importance was taking place of her levity, and rising above that childish nothingness which she was used to affect and seem proud of. Home and its noiseless occupations seemed all at once to bound her desires, as though she had forgotten all the balls and concerts and assemblies, on the anticipation of which her fancy had so long fed. And what caused this marvellous change—for better for worse—in this young person? not love nor jealousy, certainly, but an awakened sense of self-consequence—from what arising? From the marked and unceasing attentions of Scotus, who was to Emma the most extraordinary, and of course in her notion the most interesting person she had ever met.

It is scarcely necessary to explain the motives which fixed this arch villain's designs on this pretty and innocent girl. To keep her out of the way of interfering with the elector's attentions to Agnes, was his early inducement for amusing her by tricks of legerdemain and light arts of conversation ; and her evident pleasure in his skill led him on to deeper projects, which grew readily with slight encouragement. In all his visits with the elector, he devoted himself to her ; and her gratified vanity met his attentions at least half way.

One feature in the social arrangements of Kriechlingen House was the absence of Duchess Anne from the circle, whenever Jerome Scotus was of it. Whether this happened by accident or intention was known but to Agnes. The sisters grew gradually too busy with their own thoughts to lavish much attention on the reserved conduct of their high-

born guest, who was left, as much as she wished, alone with her private attendants.

But at length a day arrived, breaking this monotonous round of seclusion, fixed on by Ghebhard Truchses himself for a party which was meant to be merely one of pleasure, but which was destined to bring into play some of the deeper and most delicate springs of passion. The electoral palace of Bruhl, the favourite residence of its princely occupant, was the scene of the excursion; and arrangements were made under his directions, to combine all that was elegant and attractive consistent with the strict privacy of the plan. The persons included were the elector, Nuenar, young Leckenstein, Scotus, and the *four* female friends—for Duchess Anne announced, with an assenting smile, which few would have believed deceptive, that she was happy to make one. To Walram, the elector's confidential valet, was confided the care of the preparations previously ordered. The party were to set out immediately after sunrise, in two carriages; one to contain the elector, the duchess, Agnes, and Scotus; the other the two sisters, with Count Nuenar and Ulrick. Not a single officer of the elector's household, those usually indispensable appurtenances of his state, was permitted to intrude, and barely domestics enough attended to watch after the wants of the party.

It is needless to describe the different gradations of feeling, from delight to despondency, with which this excursion was looked forward to by the majority of the eight individuals just named; or to point out the exceptions to such, in those who considered the thing in a cold and calculating aspect. But of all the party, there was certainly not one who felt so thorough a sense of enjoyment as our heroine. The sensations in which she revelled were probably the happiest she had ever known; and because they had no direct object, no palpable design. Anxiety, with all its demon train, is sure to accompany the mind that looks even to the consummation of its happiest conceptions. But Agnes had no fixed purpose in view, only one general impulse of enjoyment pervading her mind and body both, and giving to each a buoyant elasticity, the very heaven of innocent sensation.

Ere the sun rose high enough over the summits of the seven mountains to look down on his own image in the quiver-

ing undulations of the Rhine, Agnes had viewed her beaming face and quickly-attired person in her mirror's imperfect reflection. She involuntarily smiled at her own beauty, and her breast bounded in an instinctive sentiment of happiness. But she could not enjoy herself alone. Self-admiration and self-content always call for sympathy. It is only the self-despising and dissatisfied that are unsocial. Agnes wanted to show herself to, and to talk with, some one who both admired and loved her; and knowing that the daybreak orisons of her venerable tutor were by this time far on their road to Heaven, she resolved to surprise him by a visit that might gently lead his thoughts earthwards again. She crossed the corridor with tip-toe buoyancy, and tapped at old Spangenberg's door. The murmurs of his voice caught her ear.

"Ah, still at prayer!" thought she. "So much the better. His blessing will be blended with thanksgiving, and my vanity be tempered by his devotion."

She opened the door softly; but had only half entered when she started back, on seeing the figure of a man sitting beside the reverend pastor, his body bent, in evidence of close attention to the words of the speaker. Had this new comer been a stranger, Agnes would, of course, have retired. Had the person whom she saw and instantly recognised, though his face was turned from her, so burst upon her unexpectedly a short month before, she had rapturously rushed into his arms. *Now* she stood as though spell-bound; and the current of her veins shrank freezing back to its throbbing reservoir.

The person whose appearance had wrought this change on our heroine turned round and perceived her as she stood.

"Ha! Agnes!" cried he, rising from his seat and advancing towards her. But, as if struck by her confused and almost terrified looks, he stopped short, and added, in a tone of severe reproach, "*What! listening!*"

This latter word was really the only one that Agnes heard. Its sound brought her to herself.

"Listening!" repeated she, and the blood rushed from her heart again, suffusing her cheeks and brow. "If your sudden appearance surprised me, Ernest, I am shocked by your hasty words. I thought you knew me better!"

"I thought so too, my sister; but a month produces mighty changes at-times. Pardon me, however; it *was* a hasty word.

Thou wilt forgive it, surely? Thou wert never of an ungenerous mood, and least of all to me."

All this was true; and Agnes felt her resentment expire under the breath of the apology. But that self-formed tact which springs from the necessity of deceit, taught her to feign an anger even greater than she had for a moment felt. She made no reply to her brother's appeal; and as he advanced, with open arms and penitent look, she shrunk back and turned her head away.

"Why, how is this?" resumed Ernest. "This is not nature's doing, Agnes. Either thou *didst* listen at the door, and thus looked guilt at my reproach, or some powerful feeling worked within thee, to show such unquiet signs at my unlooked for, my *unwelcome* visit."

Agnes was now really piqued by these taunts. But hypocrisy was still at work! Fearing to overact her part, she suppressed what she had erewhile assumed; and in the short space of a few minutes she performed a more varied series of deception than she had ever been guilty of in the course of as many years. At every step she felt humiliated and confused. She had yet to learn the pleasure and the pride of concealment, as regards emotions whose chief value is secrecy, and to which betrayal is little less than death.

"Ernest," said she, with somewhat recovered serenity, "this is a strange meeting for those who parted as we did, who have lived so long in love and confidence together, who have pledged such vows as bind us to each other. How is this? Whence come you? and why are you here abruptly, to take me, as it would seem, by surprise, to load me with reproach, and to provoke retort—is this the way in which we ought to meet?"

"No, Agnes, no! It is not so the Count of Mansfelt should find his sister. But ask *me* not why it is so. Turn your inquiries inwards. Your own heart must answer. Mine is this moment choked with grief and anger—I tell you so at once. The vow you have invoked is broken—in thought if not in deed. Our solemn pact is violated—there is no faith in you!"

These words were uttered with violent emphasis. The speaker showed a terrible reality of agitation. His pale cheeks and lips compressed conveyed an expression of sen-

timent as sorrowful as language could do. Agnes trembled inwardly; but no visible weakness betrayed her.

"Is it not so?" continued the brother, "speak! are not my reproaches just? Have I not good right to feel and to act thus?"

"No," replied Agnes, firmly.

"No!" echoed he, "canst thou, then, be so quickly sunk in shame as to deny it? By heavens, then, I will seek elsewhere for the confession, even in the throne-room of thy princely paramour! This instant, too,—the honour of our race impels me."

"The madness of your brain!" exclaimed Agnes, laying her hand firmly on his arm, as he attempted to rush past her. The tone in which she spoke affected him more than the gesture. He stopped and looked full in her face. He read there a whole volume of indignant energy and virtuous agitation.

"Yes," continued she, "madness alone could prompt this outrage to me, yourself, and our whole line, undishonoured until now by these foul words. No, Ernest, you shall not pass me. Here you must stay till you amply unfold the meaning of your bold and boisterous slander. And well it is that our venerable friend is present at this scene, which no one could credit on my unwitnessed word. Good pastor, will you explain this abrupt arrival, this cruel treatment, and if you know it the cause of such wild change in him who is my brother born, and the sworn guardian of the honour he now dares to impugn."

"By heavens, I marvel at thee, Agnes!" cried the brother, gazing at her, his arms folded and his attitude fixed, as she rushed towards old Spangenberg, who had remained silent in his large chair during the rapid scene. "I marvel at thy beauty and thy boldness both. Some magic has been done with thee. Nought else could, in the short space since our last parting, have added to thy charms or changed thy temper so. Can this be the meek, the placid canonesse of Gerrisheim? the open-minded, honest daughter of De Mansfelt? Ah, Agnes, increased development of beauty is dearly paid for by a change of character and a sacrifice of principle!"

A flush spread broadly on Agnes's face. It was mixed up

of vanity and shame. Pride or resentment did not this time mingle in the dye. The pleasant flattery and the deep reproach fell on a conscious mind—and *told*. She burst into tears, not wholly bitter. She saw love in her brother's look, and heard sorrow in his voice, and their combined appeal was irresistible.

"Ah, dearest Agnes, my more than sister," exclaimed he, passing his arm round her, and pressing her towards him, "how must I interpret this emotion? Is it remorse—is it a return to old, genuine feeling,—is it affection so long perverted and frozen in thy heart—now unprisoned in a gushing thaw? Speak to me, Agnes, and set me at rest, for thou hast caused me much misery."

"Supposing that I had, Ernest, you seem disposed to pay it back," said she, "but I have caused you none. You wrong me. Some fantasy possesses your brain. Why will you not explain this cruel mystery?"

"Well, then, I will explain, if still thou art resolved to seem ignorant. I at least will be frank. Whatever betides, it shall not be my fault."

With these words, Ernest de Mansfelt led his sister forward and closed the door. He then addressed Spangenberg.

"Kind pastor, your love for our house and for us will pardon my begging the use of this chamber for a brief space, will it not?"

"Yea, yea, my children. I will retire to my sleeping-room, and leave ye to yourselves. He who has for half a century shared the castle of a noble prince, may well yield his ante-room for half an hour to his patron's children."

"Now we are alone, Agnes, left to ourselves, but are we ourselves again? Has my presence broken the spell which drove me from thy heart, and made thee other than thou wert? Are the feelings of this letter still thy feelings? Oh, what a mighty influence must have been at work to have ever made them thine! Look here—is not concealment now worse than criminal, is it not vain?"

Agnes's eyes glanced rapidly over the letter which her brother held towards her as he spoke. It was half open, and she thought she saw her own handwriting. She read a few words. She knew they were not her's. She blushed and

trembled. Her brother's eye was fixed sternly on her. She met his stare by a quick and steady gaze.

"Ernest, you are imposed on. 'This is a piece of jugglery. I never wrote that letter.'"

"Canst thou deny thine own handwriting?"

"Dare you accuse me of such words as those? For shame, for shame, my brother! Where was your Mansfelt blood—your manly sense—your honest confidence? Perish the vile scrawl, and with it your more vile suspicions!"

This appeal was irresistible. The brother, convinced, confounded, repentant and indignant, examined word by word the false document with her whose sentiments it blasphemed. It was a letter to the address of the elector-archbishop, breathing confessions of unseemly boldness, and couched in language too unequivocal for doubt. The handwriting was so like that of Agnes that no difference could have been told between the real and the false. The cover was endorsed with the words, "From my beloved one," and the initials G. T. were affixed. Agnes had seen the elector's writing—ay and received some of it, in light notes of courtesy and complimentary verses, for Ghebhard wove couplets and paid compliments at times.

"So, then, I have wronged thee, Agnes! But the atonement will cost dear to this mitred profligate, who has forged thy name, and would blast thy reputation. This hour shall see thee revenged."

"Hold, Ernest, hold! you are wrong in all ways. His highness the elector could not do any act of baseness."

"What! wouldst thou——"

"Nay, nay, my brother, cease this impetuous obstinacy. I know the forger of the letter, and of the elector's signature. His motive I cannot divine."

"Tell me his name instantly."

"No, Ernest. This unwonted violence is of bad augur for the calm consideration of a case like this. His highness's name involved, his honour trifled with, we must proceed with the utmost delicacy."

"And thy name, Agnes, thine honour! are they as nought? art thou so absorbed by considerations for this libertine prelate that thou thinkest of him alone? Good sister, we quit Cologne together to-day."

"To-day!"

"Ay, Agnes. That start, that emphasis, that pallor,—and now that flush all add force to my resolve, and speed to its execution. Prepare for our journey home."

Such had been the tone of authority at all times usual to Count Ernest de Mansfelt in his conduct to his sister. She had always submitted to it as a thing of course. She had never questioned the dictation; but yielded, from habit and want of a motive for resistance, a common case even with strong minds domineered over by weak ones. But *now* a great change had taken place in the character of Agnes. Why, she knew not yet, for she was not conscious of the influence which love was working in her. But no dictation, save that of the mighty passion now for the first time developed, had evermore a chance of ruling her. She had been shocked by her brother's abrupt order for departure, but by no means shaken.

"I cannot possibly leave Cologne to-day, except for an excursion, already fixed on, to the elector's country palace at Bruhl," said Agnes, in a tone of most unusual decision.

"Indeed!" exclaimed her brother. "Are then my suggestions (he would have said *orders*) of no weight with my sister?"

"Not when balanced against the deference owing to a sovereign prince, and the courtesy to my dear friend the Duchess of Coburg, and my kind relatives and hostesses."

"Then *I* shall make one of this party; or, without me, you, Agnes, shall not be of it."

"Of it I shall be most assuredly, kind brother; and I know that the arrangements render it impossible that you can find a place."

Ernest looked and felt astounded, as these words so calm and so decided fell upon his ear. He had tact enough to observe that his empire was overthrown; but, quite taken by surprise, he wanted courage for a vigorous attempt to replace it. His instant and only resource was a cunning subserviency—that instinct which holds with common men the place of bold sagacity in great ones, and for which success too often gains the meed that the latter alone should procure.

"Well, Agnes," said he, "I must not contest with thee this point of etiquette, or force my company on thee or thy

friends. But, unless thou art prepared to throw off my guardianship altogether, thy visit to this dangerous place must come to a speedy close, for the sake of our common honour and our mutual happiness. And now reveal to me the name of him who has dared to counterfeit thy writing, and compromise thy reputation."

"I have no doubt of Count Scotus being the base impostor."

"And who may he be—this count?"

"*Who* I know not, but he is the elector's guest—a false and dangerous one I had good reason to believe, even before this treachery. You shall know more of him, my brother, in due season.—But, now I must bid thee good morning, for the time of our departure is at hand. When I return at night we shall have much to tell, of what has passed during our month's separation."

"How often hast thou thought of me the while, Agnes?"

A blush of conscious change answered the implied reproach. But Agnes was at once an adept in her new character. She hurried over the difficulty thus thrown in her path. A smile, an embrace, a light, ambiguous phrase or two formed all the reply to Ernest's serious question. In a moment more he found himself alone; and Agnes soon joined her expectant friends, and with them was quickly borne from Kriechlingen House in the elector's carriage, which was, even before the time appointed, in waiting at the rendezvous.

As Ernest heard his sister's light leave-taking, marked her as she quitted the chamber with unembarrassed air, and then saw her leave the house and enter the carriage with all the ease of independence, he felt confounded. She, his long subservient creature—beloved 'twas true, but still at all times held in thralldom—so yielding heretofore, now all at once beyond control, how could the change have happened? What portion of the mystery was to be unravelled, and by whom? On what foundation was the forged epistle built? How far had this intercourse with the elector gone? These, and a dozen more bewildering thoughts, rushed across the anxious brother. To resolve his doubts was no easy matter. He had no acquaintance in Cologne but the old and almost doting pastor; and from the vague answers already given by Spangenberg to his rapid questionings, he had little hope of any

decisive information in that quarter. To it, however, he was obliged again to turn. And he quickly summoned the old man to another conference, in which a few gleams of additional light were thrown on the domestic doings of the family in general, but which afforded no clue to the particular details of Agnes's new connexion, the absorbing subject of her brother's doubts and fears.

CHAPTER X.

IN the meanwhile the party, meant to be one of mere pleasure, moved on towards Bruhl. But how changed were the feelings of her in whose honour it was imagined, from those with which she had contemplated it a short hour before ! We have shown our heroine's presence of mind, in at once asserting her own will, in rejecting the interference of Ernest, and in escaping from the possible recurrence of its assumption. But in all this she was like a bird fluttering gracefully away from the falcon it has for a moment baffled by an ingenious turn. She trembled in her very heart, lest some new attempt should catch her on the wing ; and she never felt secure till the carriage stopped at the palace, and the impatient elector took his place within it. Then the feeling of safety and succour, the finest test of love when in the presence of the beloved one, returned in its full force. Agnes did not attempt to analyse it, nor could she have done so if she would. It was enough that her nervous throbbing ceased ; her cheek felt warm again ; her eye wandered no more, as if in search of what it would not wish to meet : and for awhile she was as she was wont to be in Ghebbard's presence, calm, confident, and elate. She looked into the ardent expression of his face as he sat before her : she let her hand linger in his friendly pressure : she drank in his cordial greeting. All else was forgotten in that luxurious lapse of thought, in that almost lapse of feeling. Or is it that her mind was concentrated in one sensation, so strong as to merge all others in it ? No matter ! We have now no time for theories. Our heroine's character is wound up. No

check must be given to the moral mechanism that is thus set in motion.

And wild and varied is that mechanism of the human heart, self-impelled and inscrutable ; acting in an eternal round of mystery, unknown even to those whose very being it regulates ! The confident delight of Agnes was soon succeeded by a powerful revulsion. A flash of thought brought back the painful scene from which she had just escaped, and awoke a thousand associations which had for weeks been slumbering. A vague notion of danger, an undefined sense of guilt, took sudden possession of her mind. Her looks glanced towards the elector, and as instantly shrank away in alarm. A delicious dread, a mingled sense of fear and happiness, next rushed upon her. Her colour came and went. Her bosom heaved. Tears started to her eyes, and as quickly ebbed back again. All was for awhile delirium. She strove, but vainly, to collect her scattered thoughts, and to enter into details of self-examination. What did she indeed feel ? In how far had she conceived, though worlds could not have made her utter, the sentiments of the forged letter ? Had she then broken her vow so solemnly pledged, " in thought, though not in deed ? " What was to be the result of Ernest's visit ? must she, oh, must she leave Cologne ? Such were the perplexing queries forcing themselves upon her, but in vain. Mingled with them, and stifling them as they arose, was the murmured melody of the elector's voice, pouring out the ardent nothings of general conversation, all condensed into realities by the look, the tone, the gesture, which endows even commonplace with intense and solemn meaning. Ghebhard's spirits had mounted to a more than usual height. He was in that mood of warm loquacity that calls for no reply. He talked as without design. But he was all the while labouring for the consummation of a great purpose, and gaining it unknown to himself. Agnes's heart was quite his own. He had conquered it unwittingly. It had surrendered without a summons.

There were, as the arrangements for the party have already explained, two other persons in the carriage. Duchess Anne, who sat cold and trembling by the side of Agnes, gazing in fascinated terror on Scotus, who occupied with the elector the opposite places. They had assumed the bearing of persons unknown to each other. The elector was not aware of their

connection. Agnes had, at her friend's request—urged by her tyrant's orders—forborne to mention it to Ghebhard ; and she was now too much absorbed in her own reflections to give any interruption to the farce of strained politeness, which Scotus carried on in his well-assumed character of a stranger to the duchess.

The distance between Cologne and Bruhl was short, but it was slowly traversed. Ghebhard had sent orders to his coachman not to hurry. He liked his posture, placed before her he loved, her silk robe rustling at his casual touch, her warm breath almost mingling with his own, as he leaned towards her in respectful animation. An hour had nearly expired before they reached the country seat which the impassioned elector meant for an Elysium. There, and then only, the course of his enjoyment met a check, for he observed an air of embarrassment, and as he thought of anxiety, in Agnes. Struck by the sudden dread of illness or disquietude having assailed her, he hastily expressed his apprehensions. She was not sorry for his inquiries, for she had for some time been reflecting with reproach and pain on her hasty meeting with her brother, and her cold and haughty tone in their short conference. The habit of old usage came back in all its force ; and she had made up her mind to avow to the elector her somewhat unsisterly abandonment of her brother's society, and to request his leave to return at once to Cologne. A few sentences, not less graceful or touching from the tone of self-accusation in which they were uttered, answered Ghebhard's questions, and admitted the truth of his fears. He, with prompt gallantry, entered into all Agnes's feelings, but would not hear of her closing proposition. He, on the contrary, insisted on despatching back the carriage, with Walram and a pressing invitation for Ernest's presence. Whatever he felt of disappointment at the intrusive necessity of this measure, he did not let it mar the graciousness of his manner. The promptitude and warmth with which he made the suggestion, which in his case was a command, made Agnes thrill with new admiration and new pride—for she had already reached that pitch of attachment which makes every praiseworthy action of its object a source of self-esteem and self-applause.

The second carriage, with Nuenar and the younger members of the party, close followed the first. The groups were quickly

broken into couples, as they entered the spacious and splendid gardens, and prepared to walk—for an appetite, in the common parlance on such occasions, but some of the party gained none on this particular morning. We have said that they soon formed themselves in pairs. Needs the reader be told the names of each? One, at least, may be divined. And all who have gone this far with Ghebhard and Agnes are now prepared to follow them into the maze of winding paths ingeniously cut, for the peculiar happiness of lovers and the greater ease of their communings, through the groves which deeply bordered the gardens.

Scarcely had they entered one of those shady labyrinths, Agnes leaning on her companion's arm, and moving on resistlessly wherever he led, than she felt in redoubled force all those sensations of mingled alarm and delight which the sudden stopping of the carriage and the interchange of general conversation had for awhile suppressed. The solitude, the warm air of the morning, the fragrance of flowers and shrubs, the chirpings of birds and the hum of insects, all combined to produce that voluptuous nervousness which is constitutional to early love. And, as if to give tone and harmony to all, a nightingale, untired by hours of moonlight practice—perhaps rocked to sleep on its branch and dreaming of its own melody—poured forth a thrilling strain which vibrated in Agnes's heart. Never was woman more fitly formed or placed to receive love's first confession.

Nor must it be thought that all this combination was mere chance. Ghebhard Truchses was not so young a lover as not to have calculated time, place, and circumstances for the direct avowal of his affection. He remembered well that in his boyish days, when passion ran riot in his heart, its fervid outbreak on untoward occasions had more than once perilled the success, which was after all, perhaps, mainly owing to the fiery ardour of youth. He knew himself now double the age of her who had raised this new emotion in him. He loved her more intensely than he had ever before loved. But from thirty *downwards* (would it might be reckoned the other way!) men *calculate* in proportion to the force of their attachment. They imagine probabilities of failure which never rise on a young man's brain. He proceeds as it were by instinct, and every step he takes is rather the effect of accident than

design. But they deliberate on each detail. They weigh their words. They watch for opportunities. And it is thus that so many young women, especially of my heroine's stamp, are attracted and caught, they know not why or how, and to the great wonderment of shallow observers, by suitors discrepant in various ways besides the mere disparity of years.

And to the lover who thus enters into the daring adventure, with all the odds against him, what are the chances, what the compensation? The impetuous burst of boyish fancy is incomparably less interesting than the delicate, yet manly, march of matured passion. Whoever has felt the first may be allowed to imagine the latter: to picture to himself the full-grown mind, with reason, taste, and sentiment united, *choosing* its object, and firmly careering on its way; each day growing bolder and tenderer, but not less wise; bringing out the development of the heart it would make its own; fostering its timid virtues, yielding to its young caprices, training its tendril fancies, losing gradually all separate identity in their clustering foliage; till at length the parent stem and the encircling parasite become as one, nourished by the same sap, and mutually supporting and embellishing each other in undivided sympathy.

Such is the progress of a successful passion between beings of unequal ages but of similar natures, undefaced by violent disputes, and those odious reconciliations, every one of which steals something from love's original stock. And if failure meets the man of mature age who ventures on the conquest of young beauty, it comes without disgrace, for he rarely hazards by a too rapid advance the chance of too violent a check. He looks out for symptoms, and is not so blinded but that he can perceive the breakers which warn him of the rocks. Hence when he fails, his rising regard is not turned to lasting hatred. No ruffian jealousy tramples out the memory of hope; nor is wounded pride left festering into fierce revenge. He can make allowance for her who was worthy of his affection; and he can admire and esteem even when he may not dare to love her.

For the last few weeks Ghebbard Truchses had caught casual glimpses of such a train of thought as this; and, within a very few days of the one at which our tale has

arrived, a more positive application of the general theory began to fix itself in his mind. He had, in fact, discovered the truth of his feelings for Agnes. He was convinced that he loved her, and in a way quite new to him. The conviction was exquisite, but to the highest degree perplexing. To be possessed by a strong passion without any direct purpose, was a curious phenomenon in such a man; and it was natural that he should impatiently labour to define his sensations. To do this effectually it was necessary to ascertain how Agnes felt towards him; and he had resolved to explain to her, in as far as he could himself understand it, the state of his mind. How to open the subject was the intricate point. He had fixed the time and chosen the place, and had even arranged some intended form of language; but had it not been for the sudden arrival of Ernest de Mansfelt and the effect it produced on Agnes, it is possible that all had been forgotten, and that the excursion to Bruhl had ended in another day of vague enjoyment, as little decisive as all those which had gone before.

A dozen times during as many minutes did the eloquent, self-confident, and hitherto undaunted elector endeavour to commence a conversation with his young and for the moment abashed companion—but in vain. Her evident timidity gave him no courage. Nothing but the most matter-of-fact remarks, answered in congenial commonplace, were exchanged between them. But a sudden reflection told Truchses he was losing precious time, and that in spite of his warning hint to Walram not to hurry on his errand, young De Mansfelt would soon arrive, if he obeyed his summons at all.

“Yes,” exclaimed the elector, “he must soon be here!” and he involuntarily stopped as he uttered the words. Agnes, moved by an answering impulse, grasped his arm firmly, and a glance, as if imploring his protection, spoke volumes to the sensitive mind of Truchses. He seemed to read her soul’s secrets.

“You fear his presence, then?” said he in a tone of fervid inquiry but full of pathos, “or at least his coming just now will be unwelcome?”

“I *fear* nothing now, at this moment, while you are near me,” replied Agnes, blushing deeper and speaking more faintly at every word—“I am sure I ought not to fear, yet——”

"Yet you *do* fear — and what or whom? This unwished-for relative? — forgive me if I mistake you or ——"

"No, no, not *you*," interrupted Agnes, with a look of beaming confidence. "But I dread my brother's coming. I could not resist your proffered invitation for his presence — but I should not have permitted it — I should have returned to Cologne."

"And leave me to the cruel disappointment of your absence! and change this day of promise into total gloom! By what reasoning, on what grounds, can you decide thus? You answer not. I see that some more than ordinary feelings agitate you. What has been said or done? This tyrant brother is the cause of all? Tell me what it is. Am I not worthy of your confidence, of your friendship?"

"Fully, fully! oh, do not doubt my feelings towards you, nor be unjust towards *him*. He is no tyrant. He loves me beyond all things. He was hurried away by error and by villany. I am much more to blame than he."

"Then what, what has happened between ye? Dearest Agnes, tell me! my whole happiness seems at stake, for yours is beyond doubt disturbed."

And she to whom this appeal was made, in all the deep-toned energy of truth and passion, felt as though her happiness no longer ran a risk. It was the first time the elector had ventured on the endearing familiarity of calling her, simply by her name, the first in which he had even hinted that his well-being was identified with hers. The unexpected, undreamt-of avowal, the sound of her name proceeding in such accents from his lips and coupled with such an epithet as he had prefixed to it, raised a turmoil of intoxicating thoughts, which left no room for fear or any ignoble misgivings. The elector held her hand with gentle force. She could not venture to look upon him, though she longed to mark the confirming expression of his features. Yet with eyes averted and filled with luxurious tears, she thought she saw his bright and burning gaze piercing her heart's depths. She placed one hand before her swimming eyes. The other still rested in his. It was, like his, ungloved — Heaven knows by what accident — and the soft and warm return of pressure which his met sent eloquent tinglings through every nerve of his frame.

"Oh, answer me," continued he, and one arm wound tremblingly round her full yet taper waist. No wasp-like and whaleboned parody on woman's fair proportions repulsed his half embrace; but the solid charms of nature's workmanship yielded to his touch, as Agnes gently shrank away. Awakening to a sense of her situation, she exclaimed,

"Spare me, in pity spare me! This is to you but sport — the repetition of an oft-acted scene. To me it is torture — it is the first time I have ——"

She paused.

"Go on, go on, most lovely — but no, I will use no phrase that might seem flattery — this is no season for ambiguous words. It is the first time that you have — what, Agnes? Finish the utterance of that sentence. It is one of life or death to me. It is the first time you have ——"

Loved! was the plainly-told but still unuttered word, implied in the gushing flood of tears, which Agnes could not and did not strive to control. The suppressed emotions of the whole morning thus found vent. She wept freely, for vanity whispered nothing to check her tears, and the increasing force of Ghebhard's firm yet respectful pressure seemed to loosen the springs from which they flowed.

And had she but looked upon his face would she have mistaken for an unworthy and vainglorious expression the triumphant smile that lit it up? No woman ought, at any rate, to give such a construction to the inspiring yet humble consciousness of joy, which every man must revel in in such a moment.

"Agnes," said Ghebhard, in his manliest yet mildest tone, and placing himself beside her on the bench to which she suffered him to lead her, "dearest Agnes, be calm, be reassured. You have nought ungenerous to fear from me. I ask no further words — I urge you to no confession. I affect no false humility, yet, as God may judge me, I sink with shame at my own unworthiness of all that is thus revealed to me in this rapturous moment. But still I see the truth, in wonderment and gratitude. Why, how, or wherefore I have gained this influence, I ask not. But how a being like you, so sensitive, so beautiful — nay, nay, shake not your head so doubtingly, it is no flattery, it is the genuine heart that speaks — how such a one as thou art — *thou*, dearest, — may

I use the tenderer word?—thanks, thanks for that assuring pressure! How thou couldst so long escape whole-hearted is a marvel, only to be outdone by what I now witness in this blessed hour. Thou lovest me, then! Yes? Is it so? Sweet hand, that speaks so to me, thus I thank you!”

And the fair member so apostrophised, the acting delegate of Agnes’s inmost feelings, was pressed to the now silent but not less eloquent lips of her lover.

“Bountiful heaven!” exclaimed he again, still holding the willingly imprisoned hand as he stood upright, “what unimagined blessings have you kept in store for me! How have I deserved this? Oh, never yet—but I will, I will grow worthy of the boon. In the bright sunshine of this open morning, under this pleached dome of leaf and blossom, amidst the incense of flowers, and before nature’s altar, I vow myself to the service of true virtue, in the person of this its living type! Never again shall an unworthy thought stain the mind sanctified henceforth by the breath of her pure spirit! Ah, Agnes, couldst thou but read the heart thus vowed to thee! It is all thine to do with as thou wilt, for anything but to adore thee not. Ask not that of me: I never could unlove what I have once loved, and never loved anything as I love thee. Speak to me then—if not words, at least, in sighs. They are the soul’s true eloquence. Look on me. Let those eyes shower light and dew together, that my heart may send out its fragrant thanks, like incense-breathing flowers, nourished at once by the moisture and the warmth of heaven.”

The impassioned elector knelt before the idol of his devotion. His warm breath almost realised a portion of his fervid words. Agnes felt as if it came from his heart and penetrated even to hers. The elector did not venture more. The flushed cheek on which he breathed felt nothing beyond that. He dared not, whatever he might have desired, imprint a kiss on it. He trembled, but it was from fear, not coldness. No pagan worshipper could have felt more intensely or more purely before the statue of his goddess. It is hard to say how much further he might have gone, had Agnes still let her silence give new scope to his excited feelings. For silence is to the lover what darkness is to the glow-worm. But speak

to the one, let in light upon the other, and the ardour and the lustre is checked, though not extinguished.

A prompt sense of her situation brought Agnes to herself, dried her tears, and gave her back the power of speech.

"Rise up, rise up," said she, "you are hurried beyond what is fitting to you, and far beyond what I merit. I am covered with confusion, that you should so demean yourself to one so lowly. Pray, pray let us walk. I am now quite recovered and composed. Yet do not, I implore you, suppose that I have not felt acutely and with painful pride, every word you uttered. How little did I imagine this scene! What would I not have given to have escaped it—for your sake more than my own. You have not deserved to suffer—and alas! what else but suffering is there now for either?"

"Silence those self-accusings, sink those fears. Give hope and happiness fair play. Evil cannot come of aught in which thy virtue forms a part; and oh, believe me, Agnes, that I shall not be henceforward all unworthy of the fellowship. I feel as though new-born," answered Ghebhard.

They were again slowly walking in the sequestered alley. Agnes leant, without prudery, yet not quite firmly, on the elector's arm, which closely but still gently held hers to his side. There was in his words and manner something that subdued every discouraging feeling which she would have been glad at the moment to have strengthened. In as far as reason could act, it was repugnant to all that she listened to. She felt it to be sophistry. She saw nothing but misery, even if there was no guilt, in the passion to which the elector gave a headlong course. But there was a fascination in all he said, which paralysed the exercise of her judgment. The frankness with which he had interpreted her emotions, the generosity which spared her the utterance of what she could not conceal, the humility with which he spoke of himself—he, whom she looked on as so superior to all other men—all this overpowered her. Her admiration of him grew each instant stronger. But it was no matter what he might have said or done while she was in that mood. It would all have turned to his advantage. Love for another is awfully blended with self-love. Right or wrong, we are instinct with the necessity of upholding to ourselves those with whom we are compromised, and fully and deeply did Agnes feel herself committed

to Truchses now. If he was generous in claiming no avowal of affection, she was honourable in admitting, both to him and to herself, that she had implied it amply. She scorned, at any consequence, to disavow the silent admission of her love, the consenting pressure of her hand. The treaty was ratified as soon as signed. She sought for no loophole of escape.

"New-born I would not wish you," replied she, with a faint smile, to Ghebhard's last sentence. "It was in your own natural character I knew you, and ——"

Another pressure of his hand, returned by hers, filled up the pause — "and loved you" would have been added, if that hand had but a voice.

"Yes, it is as yourself, as nature and circumstances have formed you, rich in such high and bright accomplishments, that you have dazzled, delighted, and won me. Your former faults I know not. I have seen none. Henceforth I will not see them. But be unchanged. Work no forced miracle upon yourself, and fancy it my doing. Be faulty still, if indeed you were so ever. Perfection would not have chosen me — and it would soon discard me, should it take the place of the more natural errors through which I have been loved and would be still."

No false shame checked our heroine as she spoke. She was not a trifler. Having passed the limits of reserve, and being awhile hurried down the current of feeling, she gave an unrestricted flow to thoughts which were too pure to prompt concealment.

"*Thou* art indeed perfection, as near as woman can be!" exclaimed Ghebhard, "and do not women come close to it? Generous and good, without one sordid thought, and even, as thou dost now, lowering themselves to man's level, whom nothing can raise to theirs! Oh, how far you are above us, Agnes, all thy divine sex! so far that I am lost in wonder at my ever having dared to love and hoped for a return."

"And yet how many a time have you said this, and felt it, in the same phrase, and with all the frank sincerity I will not, cannot doubt!"

"Agnes, I dare not deceive thee if I would: I *have* loved ere now — no matter how often or how well. But never by my soul *as* I love now! If not new-born, at least my nature is new moulded. All my former passions were for myself

alone — this is of thee and with thee. They could burn on for ever in a spurious light, separate and unreturned. But *this*, if not returned, could not exist. It had died in the first beam of thy perfection, had it not even then become a portion of thee, as comets absorbed by the sun still live in the very splendour which consumes them."

"It is thus I have been led captive; and thus I glory in my slavery," said Agnes, her animated looks directed fully on her companion. "This ardent language, all exaggerated as it is, has for weeks been the aliment of my heart. I have lived on it and loved it, even when it spoke not so openly of love. The noble sentiments so warmly expressed, the too flattering adulation lavished on me by a mind like yours, the ambitious hope that I *had* made an impression different from others — though Heaven can vouch how far short of *this* I had reckoned on it — all, all must be considered. If, then, I return the feeling I have inspired, oh, do not deem me too easily won — too unfeminine —"

"I cannot hear such words as these," exclaimed the elector. "Speak aught else, and I will listen to thee for ever. Unfeminine! Thou, a model of woman's grace and dignity. Too easily won! Agnes, feel easy on that score. A passion such as mine, so felt, so urged, was irresistible. This is no conquest on my part; view it not in such a light. It was but a pleading for mercy and for life. Enchanted by thy attractions, it was I who sank captive at thy feet; and in condescending to raise me up, thou art elevated, not debased."

"Well, well, let it be so. The gilding lightens the chain!"

"Oh, could I but express in one large word the ample scope of my love for thee, Agnes — could I condense into one moment the age of grateful servitude I would pay thee, how would this overflowing heart be relieved! Language may not tell, life cannot stretch far enough to describe or to fulfil, the deep debt I owe, but never may repay thee."

"Alas, alas! where will, where *can* all this end?" exclaimed Agnes, stopping and clasping her hands together, as though some fearful flash in far perspective had suddenly broke on her. The elector, struck like an eagle on his sunward flight, ceased at once his rhapsody, and placing his hand on his forehead as if to collect his careering thoughts, he

repeated with wild emphasis the last word which fell from Agnes.

"End!" echoed he.

"Oh, yes, in what can it all end? That is the one only question we should ask or solve. Are we not rushing on to absolute madness? Can I, ought you, go further? Have you forgotten your state and station, and must I not, for both our sakes, rouse you from your delusion? Have I not now indeed violated my vow, both in thought and deed? Ah, my brother's reproach was scarcely premature!"

"Thy brother! I had quite forgotten him," said Ghebhard, starting and looking around, as though the untoward object had burst on their solitude. "And what, then,—surely, Agnes, thou now needest no concealment with me? What is this mysterious pledge which he, it would seem, has so rudely recalled to thee?"

The elector made this inquiry in a tone far different from that in which he had urged his questions previous to the conversation we have imperfectly related. His mind seemed now absorbed by thoughts of much more import than any connected with Ernest de Mansfelt. Yet he listened, though in comparative indifference, for Agnes's answer.

"In truth," said she, "it was a vow more strange in the making than in the breaking. Yet having made I am guilty in having broke it; and as you were the cause—the unwitting cause—of my perjury, it is but fair that I should tell you its extent."

There was something in Agnes's manner which proved that she did not lay great stress on her offence.

"Thou art absolved, even before confession," said he; and, despite of her anxious air and his abstraction, they exchanged a smile. Their love was too young to be so easily overcast. Hope broke at intervals through the clouds even of Agnes's présentiment. And as for Ghebhard, there was always a rainbow in his most gloomy sky.

They continued their walk, unconscious of time and forgetful of place; and Agnes, becoming by degrees more calm and confident, related to Truchses some passages of early life between her brother Ernest and herself, which had ended in his exacting and her submitting to a solemn engagement that she was never to listen to a confession of love from any man

without his consent, and never to marry during his lifetime. This strange contract between brother and sister, for he engaged on his part to observe the same conditions, had actually been entered into. It was a somewhat boyish and a totally girlish adventure; but Ernest was several years his sister's senior, and he had arrived at complete manhood without proposing the retraction of the puerile engagement. Even on that very morning, as has been seen, he seemed to hold to it as something sacred. It had, as has been before alluded to, exercised a considerable influence on Agnes through her earlier days, and had greatly weighed with her when she decided on becoming a canoness of Gerrisheim. But little chance had it of standing an hour in the way of the real passion it was meant to check. It was only necessary for Agnes to be loved and to love, to let the spurious vow of celibacy vanish into air. During her few weeks' intercourse with the elector it never rose to her thoughts. Her brother's reproach had revived its recollection. Her dread of the consequences of her new-formed attachment again made her recur to it, and a morbid feeling of self-accusal would have converted its breach into a crime; but it was only in the moment of violating it that she discovered its flimsy texture, and even while revealing it to Ghebhard, she in justice to her good sense felt it necessary to treat it lightly.

Not so the elector. He heard her recital in astonishment, displeasure, and jealousy. Of Agnes's entire purity he had not a shade of doubt. But there was something startling to his feelings in such a compact, forced on an innocent and unconscious girl by a brother to whom the rights of primogeniture gave such authority. A loathing of this ambiguous relative rose upon Ghebhard's mind. At the very best he considered him as a harsh selfish man, who, from some wayward sentiment difficult to define, had thrown himself and his dubious attachment on the path of his sister's happiness, and who would no doubt meddle in all ways to disturb it, if its indulgence and security interfered with his own views. It was in this mood that Ghebhard was prepared to listen to the sequel of Agnes's "confession," which made him acquainted with the rapid and stirring scene that had passed between the brother and sister that very morning. She suppressed, however, some of the particulars, fearing that their abrupt avowal

might lead to some scene of violence. She admitted that Ernest's coming to Cologne was caused by a letter calumniating and falsifying both her conduct and the elector's honour. But she said nothing of the forgery, nor did she make any allusion to Scotus. But Ghebbard heard enough to inflame him. Boiling with indignation on more accounts than one, he had begun to give utterance to his feelings, when he was disturbed by a low whistle—half shrillness, half melody—the well-known signal of his discreet valet's approach, whenever his master walked in shrubbery or reposed in bower—with a lady by his side.

"Ha, Walram! already returned! come forward!" cried Truchses, and his familiar was quickly before him, with obsequious air and impassable features. A blush mantled our heroine's brow. Had she known the new comer better, she needed no emotion. He had no ears or eyes on such occasions—or at least no tongue to reveal his knowledge.

"Already?" repeated the elector; "you forgot, it seems, my bidding."

"I have been two hours absent, may it please your highness."

"Two hours!" exclaimed Truchses and Agnes together: and an exchange of glances drew the heart's blood to their cheeks.

"And the company—where are they?"

"The ladies, Count Nuenar, and Baron Ulrick, fatigued—and it may be hungry—wait breakfast in the tent, your highness."

The elector and Agnes started, and perhaps blushed again.

"And Count Mansfelt, he has come hither?—I hope," said Truchses, the last words softening the interrogative bitterness of those which preceded them.

"The count is in the gardens, your highness."

Agnes cast her eyes timidly round at this reply. Truchses asked impatiently,

"And finally, where and what doing is Count Jerome Scotus?"

"He met me at the entrance of this grove, and has turned aside upon the terrace with Count Ernest de Mansfelt, whom I was leading in all haste to your highness's presence."

"Kind Scotus!" murmured the elector; and a speaking

smile showed Walram how his "all haste" was understood and approved. The valet resumed,

"I trust your highness and the Countess Agnes are satisfied that it was not my fault if I made not more speed in my commission. But I thought it would have been unseemly to disturb the noble traveller while he was in communing with his host Baron Kriechlingen, and your highness's clemency may perhaps hold me blameless if the carriage spring *did* become loose and weak on the road, so as to cause delay in the mending, and to force the coachman to proceed afterwards at a slow walk."

"'Twas not in thy province, Walram—all is right, thou hast done well. Now hasten to announce my coming to my various guests, and say that Count Mansfelt's arrival permits the preparations for this retarded meal to be promptly finished."

The valet disappeared. The elector then turned his whole attention to soothe and encourage his companion, whose mind was indeed disturbed by the manifold intricacies of thought and sentiment.

"Fear nothing," said he, concluding a train of reasoning whose logic came from the heart rather than the head, "I promise thee safety and well-doing throughout. I have a high purpose of happiness in my mind which nothing shall thwart or subvert. I have vowed myself to thee, and am thine for ever! Let that assurance be thy shield, as thy virtue is my safeguard."

Agnes listened, but replied not. Half involuntary, half willing, she yielded her judgment for awhile to the guidance of her lover's enthusiasm. And the past, the present, and the future formed an arch of promise to her mind's eye—which was dazzled and deceived, because it *would* be so.

CHAPTER XI.

BARON KRIECHLINGEN, at all times an early riser, was up even sooner than usual on account of the disturbance caused in his mansion by the preparations for this excursion to Bruhl; and

learning of Ernest de Mansfelt's arrival, he hastened to find him in old Spangenberg's apartment, and to force upon him all the torturing honours of hospitality and cousinship. It was with infinite difficulty that his anxious guest could lead him, and confine him, to the topic uppermost in his mind. But by degrees he gained all that the old baron himself knew as to the constant intercourse between the elector and the ladies of the family, sprinkled with some wild and distorted notions of Scotus, in keeping with what has been long since told of the baron's early impressions about him. Ernest was not able very accurately to estimate the real character of the person, whom all his prejudices were enlisted against by Agnes's hurried denunciation, and who, in the language of his host, figured as something between a magician, a demon, and a philosopher.

"Keep clear of him, I tell you again, my young friend," growled the baron, with a roving glance, and a cautioning gesture, as though Scotus was an invisible witness of the conference or might have dropped into the room from any chink or cranny, "far wide of him, if you have any fear of hocus-pocus, or do not wish your pocket picked, or your doublet or hosen made the receptacle for stolen goods. But if you want words of wisdom, original or quoted, or if you require knowledge of aught that has passed for centuries, from an eyewitness and a shrewd memory, cultivate this count. — He is a very devil incarnate! And now, cousin Ernest, — let me call you so, though I have not seen you since you were a fat, chubby, rosy-checked boy, though, *Potz tausend!* you are now lank, and lean, and yellow-skinned with a vengeance — now, I think, I have clearly told you what sort of a person Count Jerome Scotus is, eh?"

"I shall turn your information to account, kind kinsman, should occasion ever present itself," answered Ernest, not over pleased any more than over praised by the baron's frankness, nor greatly enlightened by the sketch thus given of the Italian's accomplishments. Before the baron had time to embarrass his guest by further explanations, the elector's messenger was announced, and his invitation duly delivered. Ernest, though glad of the invitation on various accounts, felt some repugnance to intrude himself into the party where Agnes had pretty plainly told him his presence was likely to be out of

place. Kriechlingen observed his hesitation, and took upon himself to answer for his guest.

"To be sure, to be sure, worthy Walram, my kinsman the young count will hasten to pay his dutiful respects to his highness. Come, cousin Mansfelt, don't stand head-breaking, nor worrying your brain for fine words in which to answer the elector's gracious summons. Your personal appearance will be the best reply — though, God's sooth! it will not be the worse of a little embellishing. That fustian jerkin and greasy hosen show hard riding — you did well to choose them of dust-colour — and those brown tanned boots have mud enough in every wrinkle from knee to instep to do honour to an imperial post courier. The count will be ready to take a place in his highness's carriage, Walram, ere old Karl Kreutzer can open the postern and let it into the courtyard."

The electoral valet (a fair German title) retired to give orders to the inferior functionary whose business it was to take care of the vehicle and look to the *springs* — but we will not trouble our readers with the secret instructions or their particular execution.

"Now, Ludwig," continued the baron, addressing the fierce and grisly-looking serving-man who had done for him the clumsy work of personal attendance during some thirty or forty years, "now get ready for Count Mansfelt's refreshing-bout, which he can accomplish in my closet; to lose no time, clear out the pewter basin, and fetch a double portion of soap, and lay forth a three-ell towel, quickly. *Gott im Himmel!* stir, man, stir! your limbs are as stiff and gnarled as the branches of the old elm in the orchard hedge."

The servant hobbled away, pushed forward with one hand by his impatient master, while the other hauled out De Mansfelt in the direction of the small and most untidy nook, which served the purposes of dressing-room and lumber-closet to the rough, though rich, owner of the mansion. Ernest's saddle-bags were brought up from the stable; and a suitable change of apparel, after his ablutions were completed, metamorphosed him into the well-dressed representative of a noble house.

"Ay, now it may be fairly said you look like what you are, good cousin," said the baron, eyeing him keenly from top to toe as he came forth from the den.

"That's a brave suit, and the elector looks sharp to exter-

nals, let me tell you. You are marvellously changed by soap and water, Ernest, marvellously. Yet you are not the fine, good-looking boy that I knew you a dozen years ago. *Potz tausend!* I might almost fancy you were changed at nurse! Some men require dress to do them justice; and you, I may say without flattery, are one that depends in great measure on his tailor. What a pity it is you have such a scanty growth of beard. Those lantern jaws would well become a pair of frizzled whiskers, and a full moustache would hang gracefully upon your rabbit-mouth. But, never mind, you are a Mansfelt, of many quarterings and proud alliances to boot. Well, well, don't be so impatient," continued the plain-speaking baron, seeing that his guest was shuffling away from his compliments, "I have still a word or two to say."

His voice then sunk into the low bass of his usual whisper, and he jerked Ernest mysteriously on one side by the filigree buttons of his doublet.

"Now you must not think that you are going to Bruhl for nothing, cousin. No, you must bear a hand in the good cause for which many of us good Lutherans and stanch reformers are at work. Count Nuenar and myself and others are labouring night and day to purge our noble-minded elector of popery, and convert him to the true faith. Such an ally would be a host in the glorious struggle of Germany against the Romish idolatry. What else is it that makes me encourage his constant coming here, but the hope that my own girls and your sister, and Duchess Anne, will, among themselves, touch his highness's weak point? All the world knows what that is, though he is an archbishop, and would be a cardinal. What else makes your pious old pastor within here write sheet after sheet of theological stuff—marvellous good it is, let me tell you, for those that can understand it, but I honestly avow it makes me doze betimes—what else but to upset his highness's faith? What do you start for—that is, his faith in the damnable doctrines of the scarlet one! What else makes us all, Nuenar and myself and the rest, tolerate that devilish Italian, but our knowing that he is doing his best to pervert the elector's principles,—bounce you go again! his *false* principles I mean,—that is, to subvert them, I would say. Egad, I wish my nephew Ulrick was here to keep me from tripping! But you'll see him at Bruhl—a well-grown and

well-read youth — good looks, they say, run in the family, cousin, in *our* branch I mean — but as to learning, Ulrick has more than his share. So now remember what I say, keep a steady guard on yourself, and do all you can to lend your aid to the good cause."

Ernest smiled at the baron's eagerness for conversion ; and the latter, in an under voice, continued to exhort him to exertion all the way down stairs and across the courtyard.

" Ah, cousin, cousin, think what a grand day it would be for the pure doctrines of reform if we could but hook the noble elector, my good friend, on a sound line of theology baited with a pretty girl, make him renounce the sins of celibacy, and read his recantation of popery in the arms of a wife ! What do you think of that, Ernest ? What a son-in-law, or a brother-in-law —— "

" Drive on, drive on, coachman ! " cried Ernest, flinging himself into the carriage ; while he felt a pang shoot from temple to temple, right through his brain. The old baron stood open-mouthed and staring wide for some seconds after the carriage disappeared ; and then returned up stairs, muttering sundry words unintelligible to the echoes of posterity.

De Mansfelt would have gladly quitted the vehicle and walked to Bruhl, when Walram announced the breaking of the spring, so great was his impatience to arrive in time to snatch, as he still hoped, his sister from the danger revealed in Kriechlingen's last words. But the assurance that a few minutes would suffice to repair the accident, and the feeling that it would be unseemly to join such a party in such dust-covered plight (which the baron pronounced so unbecoming), decided him to wait as patiently as he could. And, finally, after a good hour's delay, he found himself in the gardens of Bruhl. Under Walram's guidance (which had most assuredly led him a considerable circuit from any direct chance of breaking in on the elector and his fair companion) he proceeded towards the grove which formed the scene of Ghebbard's and Agnes's conversation, when he was met and saluted by a man of remarkable and distinguished mien, richly attired, and whom he took for an official personage of the elector's princely suite. Walram bowed low and passed on.

" I trust I may without offence unceremoniously address

Count Mansfelt, etiquette not being of this day's party at Bruhl," said the stranger, with an insinuating, though unpleasing, smile.

"And to whom am I indebted for the honour of so courteous a reception and such a frank recognition?"

"I am Count Jerome Scotus — the elector's guest, and I trust I may say his friend, deputed by his highness to receive you here, and offer my poor powers of entertainment until he and your fair sister have completed their solitary ramble in yonder wood."

Scotus paid no attention to the start with which Ernest received the announcement of his name, nor did he seem to notice the emotion betrayed by the brother at the insidious winding-up of the sentence.

"I would pass on, sir, to find the Countess Agnes de Mansfelt, and through *her* introduction see the Elector of Cologne," said Ernest, steadily moving forward.

"Excuse me, Count Mansfelt, in saying that cannot be. Gallantry and decorum forbid."

"Sir, this ribaldry is unseemly, here or elsewhere, when the name of *my* sister is called in question. I insist on being led to the archbishop."

"Count Mansfelt, I am not his servant — though I am willing, nay anxious to serve *you* — to save *her*."

As Scotus spoke this sentence, which began in a haughty tone that instantly sank into one of almost servile earnestness, he laid his hand on De Mansfelt's arm. The latter shuddered at the touch, and at the piercing sternness of the Italian's glance. He felt as though riveted to the spot. The spell of old Kriechlingen's superstitious hints was on him. He strove to shake off the double influence, and said with assumed indifference,

"The family of Mansfelt needs no service, sir, fears no danger, and defies all slander."

"Yet this hurried journey — this impatient haste — this nervous excitement was caused by a mere letter."

"Which was written by ——"

"Me! I confess myself the author — and deeply do I congratulate myself in the success of my stratagem."

"Congratulate!"

"Ay, Count Mansfelt, and you will ere long join in the

feeling. I have proffered service, but I have anticipated the offer by the act."

"Strange service this to bring me from Franconia, post-haste, by a forged libel on my sister's honour, which you now unblushingly avow."

"And justify. I knew you not, remember, and I felt that some most powerful inducement was required to make you act with speed and secrecy? Am I not justified by success? You are here, and your sister is not yet lost."

"Not yet! Count Scotus, I lose time in this strange parley. I cannot now sift motives. I must see Agnes on the spot: where is she?"

"You risk nothing by listening to me and depending on her. You are either time enough or too late. They have been alone these two hours past."

"This is too bad — it distracts me quite! oh why is not my brother Christopher here, to aid me in this perilous, this dishonouring emergency!"

"Be satisfied — he is on his road."

"His road hither?"

"Yes. A counterpart of the letter which brought you is ere now in his hands in Paris. And, if he share your spirit and your sense of right, he will ere long join us to effect this great deliverance."

"This is all mockery — insult almost. What right have you, sir, to mix yourself in my family affairs? What possible claim have we on a total stranger?"

"I can bear this and more, Count Mansfelt. You are young."

"There is small difference, methinks, in years between us, but even were it greater ——"

Ernest's sentence was cut short by his observing the awfully strange expression of his companion's countenance, on which a smile of mingled grief, contempt, and pride struggled, or rather harmonised, with a haughty frown that seemed the type of some remote unfathomable recollection, rather than a ripple on the troubled waters of immediate thought.

Scotus took De Mansfelt, with authoritative familiarity, under the arm, and said,

"Let's walk on this terrace awhile. Keep your mind tranquil, all is right."

Ernest made no resistance ; and Walram, who had at a distance marked the scene, then moved slowly on in search of his master.

" Count Mansfelt," resumed Scotus, in the peculiar solemn yet not oppressive tone, which was at all times prodigiously effective with those whom he mystified, and who could be played upon, " you know, of course, the traditionary legend of your house, relating to a visit paid once at Mansfelt, in winter, storm, and midnight, by a strange wounded man, who, succoured by the then lord of the castle, Count Polrath the Bold, your far-back ancestor — for it was in December, 1263 — suddenly disappeared, without a clue to his discovery ; but leaving in token of gratitude a small portrait of himself, and one of two twin brilliants of great price, which he had worn on each of his two little fingers, his only ornaments ! You remember the tradition ? "

" To be sure. And my sister wears the ring to this day. It has never left our family, and never shall."

" Look here," said the Italian, showing on his little finger one of several rings which habitually adorned his hands.

" That is my sister's ring," said Ernest, briskly.

" Recollect, count, it had a companion," replied Scotus, calmly drawing on his glove. Ernest felt chill.

" You have seen the portrait ? "

" Yes, as a boy, before it was given to the King of Saxony by my father."

" Look in my face."

" The likeness is certainly strong ! — You are then a descendant of that mysterious stranger ? " cried Ernest, glad at having found an easy solution to the strange coincidences which were curdling his blood as they became evident.

" Resemblance to one's ancestors, Count Mansfelt, is not always confined to looks. You, for instance, are not at all like Count Polrath the Bold ; but your voice" — this was said with emphasis, but as if the speaker thrown off his guard, was summoning up a recollection rather than striving to make an impression — " Your voice is such that I could fancy it the very same."

Ernest shuddered as the Italian spoke, and before he had time to recover himself, the latter hastily exclaimed,

" Ha ! here comes the elector and Countess Agnes. Now

one word more for your guidance and consideration ; I have some faint power of reading men's thoughts — I can answer for his this moment. He intends to recant his religion, renounce his state, and — marry your sister !”

A deadly paleness spread over Ernest's face. His agitation was excessive. He could scarcely move ; and he did not even essay to speak, when Truchses came forward with an unembarrassed air leading Agnes by the hand, and cordially offering his own to his stranger-guest, as the sister, deep blushing and painfully alive to her brother's emotion, performed the ceremony of introduction. Scotus had slipped away, and joined the tired-out expectants of breakfast, who were all assembled in a brilliantly ornamented tent, pitched for the occasion on an adjoining lawn.

CHAPTER XII.

THE elector carried everything before him by the impetuous brilliancy of his manners that morning. De Mansfelt's agitation, Agnes's anxiety, the deep suffering of Duchess Anne, and the minor disquietudes of the rest, were as though swept away or levelled to a general tone of enjoyment, as Truchses gave full scope to his enthusiastic mood. Scotus, who never sought to rival his host in a display of talent, was still a powerful auxiliary when he chose to exert himself on an occasion like this ; and, thus seconded, the elector's talents for conversation were all brought into better play by the Italian's varied knowledge and its apt illustrations.

The hours rolled rapidly over. The morning meal was long lingered at, as it had been long delayed. Many varieties of time-killing were prepared by the elector. Music was heard at intervals from recesses of the woods ; boats were waiting on the lakes, where swans and water-fowl swam gracefully or dived in sport ; wild animals, made almost tame by constant training, deer, hares, and others gambolled in reclude enclosures ; the greenhouses and gardens, richly stocked with every seasonable flower and shrub, offered fragrant attractions to the straggling groups. It *was* so far a day of

pleasure ; for the presiding genius was love ; and even in its fears, its misgivings—ay in its very suffering,—love's essence is enjoyment.

Ghebbard, as though satisfied that he had completed a great work, wore an air of self-content and courteous benevolence that made him show to peculiar advantage in his character of host this day, though it at all times sat well on him. He appeared without study to divide his attentions equally among his guests. Almost all were astonished at the absence of the exclusive devotion which he generally paid to Agnes, and it was attributed to various causes by the different observers ; but with the exception of Nuenar, it excited no particular concern, for all the rest were busy in their own personal thoughts. His were fixed entirely on his favourite project of the elector's conversion. He had for some time set his hopes on Agnes being the means, through Heaven's grace, of their accomplishment. He was much puzzled and distressed by the apparent check now given to his friend's idolatry, for he had no experience of a lover's feelings, and he was too cautious to seek an explanation from others. Scotus he hated, while from the reasons betrayed by Kriechlingen, he tolerated and encouraged him : and there was no one else with whom he could venture to commune on this delicate subject.

Young Ulrick, for whom Scotus, after a few private turns in the garden, had left a clear course, pursued the advantage thus offered for his attentions to Duchess Anne. Emma followed with her eyes, and caught eagerly every movement and word of the Italian, the object of her unbounded admiration. Poor Fredolinda, neglected by her fickle cousin, found consolation in the kind sympathy of Agnes. Ernest de Mansfelt, in a maze of anxiety, and out of his congenial sphere of privacy, was nevertheless dazzled, and in his own despite delighted, by the elector's whole bearing. But his many varieties of feeling were all fast centring to one object—the means of immediately removing Agnes from this dangerous attraction.

The repast which we call dinner, but which the Germans—a more methodical and time-keeping people—name the mid-day meal, was, in consequence of the late breakfast, to be served an hour beyond the usual period. The interval was filled up as we have already intimated, and the party, being

somewhat tired by their late promenades, had taken possession of one of those sloping banks which abounded in the pleasure-grounds, and seated or reclining on the grass and moss, they enjoyed the delicious freshness of the air, which played through a grove of young beech trees, that formed a shelter from the sun. Deep feeling was concealed by light talk ; and thoughts which were indelible were fluttered over by words as volant as the birds above the thinkers' heads.

The elector maintained his cautious bearing towards Agnes. He was beside her at times, apparently more by chance than by design, and he now lay near her feet, leaving her to interpret through his eyes what was passing in his heart. Ernest was a little aloof, closely watching ; and Scotus was slyly hovering about, giving to each of the party by turns a ready phrase, for his words were always to the purpose—and that was to manage all present for the furtherance of his several designs.

"That sprig of heath is a simple, and suiting ornament, fair canonesse," said Truchses, as Agnes divided a small branch which she had plucked close by, and prepared to place it in her girdle.

"It is scarcely a fair specimen of the flowers of Bruhl," replied she ; "but it is a great favourite of mine, and I shall keep this and cherish it, in remembrance of the place——"

"And of the day, I hope ? Pray then let me beg for that portion which you seem about to cast aside. But giving away is in some cases the same as throwing away ; and even in the latter sense I shall be proud to pick up a symbol of your taste, and I will take leave to bear it as a badge of my service."

"Let us all wear the heath-blossom in our hats," said Nuenar, brightening at this proof of his friend's gallantry, "so we may commemorate both this day and place, and form a new order of chivalry, whose tutelar guardian shall be Saint Agnes, and whose grand master his highness the elector !"

"A happy thought !" exclaimed Truchses, springing up and placing the sprig which Agnes gave him, not in his hat but in his bosom. "Nuenar, you have immortalised yourself by this bright motion. Come, ladies all, and gentlemen, this moment shall see the creation of the order of the heath-bell. The statutes, the dignities, and the decorations shall all be regulated in fit time and place. But now for the consecration !

Count Scotus, why do you look out there so intensely? Are you deaf or insensible to our chivalric proposals?"

"Not so, your highness. I hear and sympathise; and i'faith your infant institution seems not likely to want knights, if, like the ancient order of the Golden Flower founded by Sir Tristram of old—and as to the foundation of which I might be probably considered no ignorant authority—all errant adventurers be admitted. See, see, your highness, what a goodly troop of Neophytes approach the palace gates."

As the elector and the others moved to the summit of the hillock which commanded a view of the gardens and palace, a loud flourish of trumpets and the rattle of kettle-drums was heard; and a troop of between forty and fifty men, some mounted, some on foot, were seen moving forward in an irregular and straggling manner. As they came on in a cloud of dust, which swelled every moment as if proud of its convoy, it was impossible to distinguish who or what they were, the colours of their dress or banners, or the particular nature of their service. The elector's troops they could not be; nor were there at that time any foreign soldiers likely to pass through his territories; while it was certain that no deputation of his own subjects would have ventured to force themselves on his retirement.

"What band of intruders may this be? This is an unlucky chance!" exclaimed Nuenar.

"By chivalry no!" cried Truchses; "I am well pleased at the visit, be it from whom it may. I would that all mankind were witness to my happiness—but not that they knew its cause," was added in a soft murmur to Agnes, by whose side he stood. "Let the gates be opened, and the welcome given, and the tables spread! Who is there to see my words fulfilled?"

Nuenar and Leckenstein stood forward as the elector spoke. But his eye fell on Scotus, who made no offer of service, yet looked as if he wished to be employed.

"Thanks, my good friends, I see that without a suite even I am in no want of servitors. Count Scotus, I will impose this office upon you; and by my troth I think you are most fit for parley with those unbidden guests, for I can fancy them nought but some troop of Italian actors, perhaps the Venetian—"

comedians the *Gli Gelosi*, from Blois. That would be luck indeed! You have seen that famous company, count?"

"I was present at their first night's appearance at the Hotel de Bourbon, three years back."

"And they were followed by vast crowds, were they not?"

"Your highness may rest assured that six of the best preachers in your archbishopric would not succeed in drawing such an audience gratis as the *Gli Gelosi* brought together at four sous a-head."

"There is no irreverence, count, in saying that the French are a people of good taste. Would that these visitors might be your clever countrymen."

"'Tis little likely. So much were they alarmed at being taken prisoners by the Huguenots on their way to Paris, that they have all sworn never to leave it again, as it is not to be expected that King Henry will a second time pay their ransom?"

"Why not, count, if the Gondi, the Strozzi, and it may have been the Scoti, make my royal cousin and good friend King Henry suffer at the rate of thirty thousand crowns a night at dice and primero?" said Truchses, laughing.

"If princes will have pleasure they must pay for it," replied Scotus, with a sideway smile, as he bowed and walked away to execute his mission.

"Yes, these Italians have made his majesty of France know the value of their services," said Truchses.

"Their *price*," added Nuenar, "and I trust that other sovereigns will take warning by his folly, and fervently do I hope, in all due submission to your highness, that no vagabond set of transalpine mountebanks is now come to raise contributions on the electoral purse."

"Tut, tut, Adolphus! Let cynical and stinting economy be forgotten for to-day at least. So, here comes Walram with tidings of the strangers. In good truth that fanfare is bravely blown; they are no ordinary trumpeters."

"In his highness's present mood every thing is harmony," said Nuenar to Leckenstein.

"Yes, he has set us all in tune; but methinks, Count Nuenar, there is one discordant chord," replied the young student, with a sly glance at De Mansfelt, who watched nervously the elector's increased attentions to Agnes.

"He is not yet wound up, friend Ulrick. We must give him the key-note by and by ; and it is strange if he be not then the leader of the concert."

At this moment Walram advanced in great speed, and was met by his impatient master, who asked the names and quality of the new comers.

"May it please your highness, the name given at the gate, which the porter closed firmly as the doubtful-looking troop came up the avenue——"

"He did wrong, Walram. I keep open house to-day."

"Was Prince Henry of Liegnitz——"

"And plenty of loose company in his train I warrant him. So, this is our unbidden guest, is it ? 'Tis well that the electoral treasury is not kept at Bruhl, or it might scarce suffice to fill the begging-box of his highness."

"Besides whom are Ritter Heinrich Von Sweinishen, Baron Koller, Herr Zirchen, and several other captains," continued the methodical valet, not noticing his master's interruptions.

"A goodly company, indeed," resumed the elector. "Heaven grant that the larder be well stocked, or a miracle will be needed in favour of those hungry marauders ! Back, Walram, quick, and give orders that the whole provender be put forth. Let tables be laid in the garden under the smaller tent for those captains, and a cover placed at my own for his Highness Prince Henry. Well, Count Scotus, what says my worthy and wandering cousin of Liegnitz ? You have given him prompt greeting."

"His highness's impatience would brook but small delay," replied the Italian, as he came quickly forward.

"Well, what does he want or ask ?"

"Verily, his wants seem manifold—the most pressing of them being a dinner, for he swears he and his train are almost famishing. But he asks to be presented with due and decorous state—but still it would appear in unwashed dignity—to the Elector-archbishop of Cologne."

"Then, my kind friend Nuenar, I must depute you to accompany back Count Scotus, in honour of this roving representative of royalty. Tell him there is neither elector nor archbishop here to-day, but that if he will stay *incog.* and *sans façon*, by any title he chooses, to dinner with Ghebhard

Truchses, knight-commander of the heathbell, he is welcome to all that hospitality and chivalry can afford him."

"Not *all* I hope. Pray let me intimate that the strong box of the order forms no part of its present possessions."

"Say what you please, Adolphus. Be as prudent as you can ; but I fear I must lay my account to have *some* contributions levied on my purse. No !" continued he, as his two representatives retired to fulfil their mission. "I can have no better chance of escape than the elector-palatine, the Elector of Mayence my neighbour, or the various other princes whom this sovereign mendicant has so deeply mulcted during his many months' rambles. You have heard of his adventures, Duchess Anne?"

"Scarcely," replied the duchess, with a languid indifference. "Prince Henry's quarrels with his subjects, and his being summoned to Prague by an imperial decree, reached me as common news a year ago at Coburg. His escape to Augsburg, and his visit to John Cassimir at Heidelberg, were buzzed afterwards in my ears ; but all such matters have been long of little attraction to me, as your highness may well believe."

"Remember, dear duchess, I am no more a highness to-day. A poor knight only, doing the rites of hospitality to his friends. And I know no better entertainment, had I but time before his coming, than a sketch of this wild wanderer's doings since he left Silesia, and gave a respite to his worn-out subjects. But we shall have him here instantly ; and I confess myself curious to see him."

"There is no danger in him I hope, your highness?" said Emma, timidly, and with a little of her old air of not ungraceful affectation.

"Fear nothing, Emma, the elector-palatine had his teeth drawn and his claws clipped before he let him loose from Heidelberg," observed Leckenstein ; and a few more questions and answers, not more complimentary than what went before, prepared the party for the approach of the strange being who formed their subject.

"Here he comes ! I wonder what title he has chosen," said the elector.

"The wild huntsman would not be amiss," observed De Mansfelt, endeavouring to chime in with the humour of the rest, who all looked towards the stranger.

"Or Sir Orson of the hairy coat," exclaimed Ulrick, laughing outright ; while the ladies gazed, half in wonder, half in alarm ; and Truchses could scarcely command a decent display of gravity.

Nuenar and Scotus now approached, ushering with great solemnity the renowned Prince of Liegnitz, and eight or ten of his followers, all, like himself, fit types of the strange and adventurous life they had for some time led. This principal personage of the group was a man of about thirty years of age, but so disfigured by a profuse beard totally untrimmed, that it was difficult to guess accurately his standing in the world, or to form a judgment at first sight of the expression of one half of his face at least. The upper part was coarse and un-intellectual, but a bold, random glance from sharp blue eyes spoke vivacity, while a compressed and narrow brow threw a dash of fierceness to complete the picture.

A fantastically-shaped cap of some animal's skin, with a plume of many-coloured feathers, was doffed as he came near, and a thick crop of curled and tangled hair looked like an undercoif of nearly the same materials as the outer covering ; a cloak of fur hung loosely on one shoulder ; his doublet was of leather, buttoned close to his chin, and trimmed with fox-skin ; his hosen were of the same stuff as the doublet, and a pair of huge unwieldy boots rolled in many wrinkles, reached half-thigh up ; a rapier dangling at his side, and a pair of huge pistols and a dagger stuck in his broad belt, from which hung at one side a leathern bag in shape of a purse, but looking very lank and flabby, completed his costume and accoutrements. His suite was composed of men almost all young, and none beyond the earliest verge of middle age. Reckless-looking fellows, who had all the air of leaders fit for some band of *condottieri*, such as were then straggling about various parts of Germany, in a vagrant search for employment or plunder.

"Most noble knight, commander of the heathbell, and in the honour of it and every other order of chivalry," said Nuenar with a most stoical steadiness of muscle, "allow me to introduce into the heart of this fair and gallant company, the high and puissant Count Grump Von Dampfnooodle, who with his band of knightly followers, seek repose and refreshment for themselves and their steeds ; but who, in con-

sideration of the yet unendowed and infant age of the order, wave all pretence to the usual largesse accorded to errant knights and military freebooters." This last word was merged in a whispered intimation by the speaker that he had sworn that the elector was without a single groschen in his pockets, and stipulated that no attempt at extortion was to be made.

"Fair knight," said Truchses, with a prodigious command of countenance, while the ladies were all obliged to turn aside, and Ulrick was forced to smother his laugh behind a rosebush, "in the name of the brotherhood and sisterhood of our young order, I bid thee and thy gentle company warm welcome, and offer thee such poor fare as we may be able to cook up in a hurry, with plenty of wine to wash away your fatigues, and drown your cares, if you have any, which Heaven forefend."

"Great commander," replied the prince, taking up the cue of the reciprocal *incognito*, and with a free and easy adaptation of his new character, which showed he had some humour, and had not rolled over the world without gathering some of the moss of *manners* at least—"gladly do we accept this generous summons, and infinite joy has the fragrance of your kitchen communicated to our nerves olfactory, and potent flavour doth it promise to our palates. We hope the bright and beautiful portion of this goodly company will pardon our dust-covered encumbrances, and take us for what we would be rather than what we seem."

"Your hand, sir count," said Truchses, stretching forth his own, which was heartily grasped by his guest; and a mutual look was as significant an admission of their several stations as the most formal exchange of sovereign recognition.

The elector, keeping up the mock heroic tone of ancient chivalry, presented each lady to the prince by her own proper name, except Duchess Anne, whose dignity required the substitution of some humbler title; and the male portion of the party, on either side, went through the ceremony of introduction. Various interchanges of light and lively sallies followed up the first opening of their intercourse; and even before dinner was announced the elector and his friends were satisfied that the new comer was at least a man of observation, tact, and enterprise, and that several of his followers, under rough exteriors, had the bearing of men accustomed to good company.

Prodigious execution was done at the dinner-tables. Henry of Liegnitz had no small appetite, and a long ride had provoked its utmost exertions. His followers were at all times ready to do honour to such a bountiful repast, as even in the hurry of this occasion there was a certainty of being provided with at any of the elector's establishments. Wine always flowed freely wherever Truchses presided ; and long after the ladies of the party retired from the principal tent to wander in the gardens, where they were soon joined by the male portion of their company, loud laughter, songs, and boisterous talk told that the occupants of the captains' table were still engaged in their "potations pottle deep."

Agnes and her friends had been greatly amused by the strange specimen of princedom. He had all the fluent egotism of a clever and not over-delicate adventurer, and a rough and ready humour flavoured his various anecdotes, the verity of which no one thought it advisable to scrutinise. The elector, always inclined to make allowance for even great faults, and to give more than due credit to even small merits, was not niggard in his applause of Prince Henry's social qualities, and evidently strove to keep down all recollections of a disparaging nature. As his hospitality was unstinted, so was his cordiality unrestrained. Whatever stains might have sullied the character of any of his guests, they were never reflected in the bearing of the host. Manners like his could not fail to produce their usual effect, even on Henry of Liegnitz ; and all the better feelings of his nature were aroused in favour of the man who received him with so little guile, and treated him with so much frankness.

Good cheer and old wine are amazing softeners of hearts that are often callous to mere moral agencies. But when the secret spring of feeling in the breast of a rough nature is reached in the moment of convivial confidence, there is generally an overflowing gush that carries away all ordinary selfish or sordid prepossessions. So it was on the present occasion, as may be gathered from the following conversation, which took place between Ghebhard Truchses and his guest, when, at the request of the latter, they left the others for awhile and straggled into one of the by-paths.

"Well, my good host, and kind compeer," said Prince Henry, "we may now at length fling aside our masquerade,

and speak as becomes two independent sovereigns, hand in hand, and face to face. This is a pleasant farce that we have been playing ; but I much doubt if your highness, notwithstanding all your lay and theological lore, can form a notion of the serious purpose which brought me hither, or of the subject I am now about to broach ? ”

Ghebbard thought he could form a very shrewd guess ; but he made no answer, nor did he suffer a look to escape him which might wound the feelings of his guest. He had something in his nature which prevented his accompanying even alms-giving with an air of contempt ; and the Prince of Liegnitz had not yet come to that.

“ Yes, by the mass !—pardon my favourite oath, though, as a Lutheran, I admit it does not roll glibly off my tongue ; yes, my very reverend, and right hospitable archbishop-electoral and cousin, it is a matter of moment that I would now confide to you ; and much it behoves you to have all your wits at work, to meet the exigency of the case.”

“ What can be the amount he means to ask for ? ” said Truchses to himself. “ I am ready to listen with all attention to your highness’s proposals,” said he aloud, “ and you shall not find me niggard in proportion to my means.”

“ I am glad to hear so brave a sentiment from you, cousin, for in God’s truth it is no trifling drag that will be made on your resources ; but as I am not a man of many words, nor a prince of false promises, I will come at once to the pith of my business with you. You have heard a great deal of me, no doubt, my cousin ? Yes ! and not much good, you would answer.”

“ I would *not* so answer, Prince Henry, even had calumny or ill-nature warranted.”

“ You might without offending me, cousin. I have lived too long on the rinds and parings of the world’s courtesy to look for the kernel now. I have from various causes, somewhat by my own fault perhaps, and not a little by the injustice of others, been forced to do many things I would rather have left undone, and I have left marks on my career that I would wish blotted out. But no matter. What is done is done. Yet some atonement for past folly may be found in present fairness. It is well bruited through Germany how I have quarrelled with my subjects, broke from the emperor’s

arbitration, and flung myself on the resources of my own genius. The many shifts I have made are no secret. But you have yet to learn that I have been across the frontier into France, and have engaged, head and shoulders deep, to aid the Prince of Conti in his rebellion against King Henry."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed, I have. My gallant force of Reitres, four thousand strong — when I succeed in raising them — shall assuredly join the Huguenot army, unless, as may be, some native German prince require my aid, and then I shall hold myself free from all foreign engagements, for one's own country is like one's flesh and blood — it must be looked to first."

"Well, prince, I will follow the good example you set me. You fairly own yourself a friend to heretics, a foe to the church, and engaged in a hostile league against my friend and ally the King of France. I cannot therefore aid your enterprise to the value of a single groschen, nor give my countenance to the raising of a man in my territory. But if a private loan for your personal purposes be needed, as far as my treasury permits, you may command it."

"The Elector of Cologne does not belie his fame. This is what I call plain speaking and fair dealing. Far different from your sneaking neighbour and fellow-dignitary of Mayence, who refused me plump, on both private and public grounds, but proffered a paltry present of fifty crowns to my cavalier cavalcadour, the Ritter Sweinishen, for the sake of his father's memory forsooth!"

"But in other quarters you have been more lucky?"

"Not much more so. The spirit of generosity has left the princes, but not to settle in the people. While the Count Palatine Richard of Rheinfels threw dust in my eyes with fine promises, but not a kreutzer into my purse, the beggarly burghers of Frankfort refused a small advance of four thousand crowns, though I and my train had spent all our ready cash in their town and bought goods on credit to double the amount required."

"Unreasonable dogs!" exclaimed Truchsces, with a smile.
* "And the result of all is that we are now in serious straits. Were it not for two thousand crowns a month paid me by the Prince of Conti, my captains might starve, and my recruits be

in open mutiny. But now, by the mass ! a brighter day seems dawning."

"How is that?"

"How? Why that your highness, I know, will take us all into your service."

"What, I, Prince Henry? I who am at peace with all men, and who, if opposed by some turbulent and obstinate subjects in my views of reform, and the rooting out abuses, am nevertheless in close alliance and amity with the emperor, the pope, and all the confederate potentates of Europe! Alas, prince! you bring your gallant levies and fair offers to a bad market."

"Alas, and alas, elector! that so noble a nature as yours should repose on such hollow and treacherous support. There is not—and I say it on good grounds—one of those dear allies of yours who is not leagued for your ruin, as firmly as Condé, Conti, and Navarre against that profligate spendthrift Henry of France. Intrigues which you are too generous to suspect, and far too weak to cope with, are everywhere on foot against you. You are beset with dangers, ready to burst forth all around you. You must rouse up and meet the storm with vigour and desperation; and if you do, Henry of Liegnitz may be no mean support. Such as I am I offer myself to you, free, without cost or charge; for, by the soul of honour within me, I had rather fight in your cause for nothing than serve another for high pay and rich booty!"

The elector was much struck by this speech. The revelations it conveyed were startling. But he did not take it all for granted. His sanguine and confiding temperament was not prone to believe every hint of treachery, or threat of evil; and the authority for the present forewarning was but loose, to say the best of it.

"You are startled, but not convinced—is it not so? You would rather take me as your guide on a foray than your counsellor in a closet?" asked the prince, with swaggering *naïveté*.

"In truth, prince, this matter is of such serious import that some proof must be forthcoming ere I can quite confide in your opinion."

"Weigh my words, then, and you will not find them light ones. I have said enough to put you on your guard. Events

will soon speak trumpet-tongued to you. Be assured I have not travelled through Germany with my eyes shut, nor my ears stopped—I know the truth of my statements.”

“How could I, of all men, have provoked such falsehood and hostility?”

“By being frank and friendly. You are hated because envied; envied because talented, generous, and confiding. Wisdom sometimes speaks out of the mouths of fools as well as children. Therefore do not despise a warning which may save your sovereignty, though it proceed from one who has nearly lost his own in spite of all warning. We must talk this over at more leisure, good elector, and I stake my life on being able to give you proofs of all I have put forth, and more.”

“I shall see you soon, prince?”

“Whenever you like. I must now muster my troop, ere your highness’s Rhine wine oversets them quite, and proceed to Cologne, where my boats, with a portion of my new levies, are by this time arrived.”

“You have, then, gathered some recruits already? Of what sort are they, prince? Raw troops or disciplined? and their creed?”

“These thick-coming questions augur at least that your highness is alive to my warning. Trust me, the men I have under my orders are of the right stamp for deeds of life and death. Two thousand veterans of bone and sinew, who have waded knee-deep in war, good Christians all of them, considering all men as brothers, no matter of what persuasion, and ready to cut the throats of papist or protestant impartially in honourable warfare, for whatever employer pays them best.”

“A prepossessing picture, prince! and how have you disposed of this large force?”

“They are scattered in various towns along the Rhine—in pledge, since truth must out, for their keep, their clothing, and accoutrements—but ready at a day’s notice to concentrate on Cologne, when the tug of war begins, and the funds for paying their debts are forthcoming.”

“Enough of this for to-night, kind prince. You will come to me to-morrow at the palace? In the meanwhile you shall

find no obstacle in the way of your proceedings. But what you have said is secret."

"As the grave! and now, good night! Finish your day of pleasure, brave archbishop. To-morrow will be one of business."

The two sovereigns, who had thus opened a negotiation of serious purport with such small formality, soon separated. Liegnitz collected his captains, made his adieux, and wended his way towards Cologne, his trumpets sounding parting salutations to his host, whose generous farewell was not confined to words, a large donation to the adventurers proving his gratitude for their chieftain's proffered services, and giving the lie to Nuenar's niggardly provisions and provisoes.

Ghebbard Truchses possessed in an eminent degree that vigorous quality of mind which enables one to discard or fly from, for a season, a momentous train of thought, and to deliver oneself up to the temporary indulgence of another, less serious but as absorbing. He was awake, as it were, from a long dream of political security, by his conversation with the Prince of Liegnitz. He saw, in a glance, and to its full extent, the possible danger of his situation, and he felt his dignity, his honour, his pride, all involved in the necessity of a prompt solution of the question at stake. But he felt as keenly the force of that other involvement in which his heart's best affections were compromised. Ambition was not forgotten while love was brought to memory. But the latter was in the ascendant; and Truchses resolved that for that night at least its paramount interests should not clash with those of any other. No sooner, therefore, had the noise of the horses' hoofs died away on the *chaussée*, and the last vibration of the trumpets were blended with the echo of that which preceded them—distance producing on sound the same effect which time does upon thought—than the elector, resuming at once his morning's character, and returning to the enjoyment of his day's chief delight, gave to all who were with him the notion of a man whose mind knew no care, and whose happiness no bounds. Giving a free rein to his words, he launched forth into a new display of conversational power, ran over in review the events of the day, sketched in lively colours—but with no tinge of gall—the manner, appearance, and character of his late guests, and completely succeeded in giving to most of those

who remained the semblance, if not the complete reality, of a sympathy with all he said and felt.

The sun was now down, the evening breeze stole out to fan the drooping and drowsy flowers, the nightingales already flooded the air with melody. It was nearly time to end the too short day and return to town. Another walk into the wooded depths of the pleasure-grounds—a lingering lounge round the lake—a farewell to the sleeping swans—and it was dark.

“Now,” said the elector, “we are ready. Let the carriages be brought forth!”

A change in the order of the places occupied in the morning became necessary for the accommodation of De Mansfelt. Truchses settled the matter, promptly and without consultation with any one. He yielded his own seat to Ernest, and found for himself a ready space between the two ladies. The horses set out at a steady walk. The pitchy darkness required flambeaux-bearers in front, and they could not be outpaced. The torch-light threw its sombre colouring on the trees which lined the road, and was reflected back on the gilded ornaments of the harness and the carriage. But within the vehicle, the curtains of which were close drawn, not a single gleam could penetrate; and it might have been supposed from the deep silence there that each of its occupants slept soundly, or had lost all waking consciousness in the dark depths of thought. But for two of the party, at least, there was no slumber, and but little thought. Their minds, unreached by ordinary sensations, throbbed in a vague, delirious ecstasy—but not, alas! apart from mortal feelings. The inscrutable connexion of sensation with sentiment was complete, and, for the time, indulged in all the divine purity of passion. *His* arms were clasped round her waist. *Her* burning cheek lay close to his. Lips met and lingered long together in sacred silence. Two hearts were joined for ever by the holy import of that solemn pledge.

The carriage stopped.

“Ha! what! where are we?” cried the elector.

“In the court-yard of Kriechlingen House. Your highness slept,” said Scotus.

“Thank heaven I did not dream!” replied Ghebhard promptly recovering from his trance of ecstasy; and as the

lights flared in upon the party, his eyes rested on the almost convulsed yet inexpressive face of De Mansfelt, who seemed transfixed on the seat before him. That was a moment of triumph worth a world to a mind like that of Truchses. He said or looked nothing of what he felt. But he *laughed* deep in his heart, at the baffled brother who dared to cast a thought between him and the object of his adoration.

The leave-takings were brief. The ladies were safely deposited in the care of the old baron who waited to receive them. The elector's carriages drove rapidly off. The four female friends were soon in their separate chambers. Just as Agnes reached hers, her brother stepped across the corridor, and said, in manifest agitation,

"Now for our interview. I would speak with you, Agnes!"

"To-morrow, then, to-morrow, to-morrow," replied she, hastily escaping, without even a look accompanying her words, the last of which was cut short by the rapid closing of her door.

The elector arrived at his palace in a whirl of wild sensation. He quickly passed into his private room. He made no request, according to his wont, for Scotus's company to supper.

"Wine, Walram, wine!" were the only words he uttered. And when the obsequious valet had placed some flasks and a large goblet of Venetian glass upon the table, he silently retired; nor did any call disturb him from his watch in the anti-room, till the dawn glimmered through the lofty and curtained casement.

And what a glorious night had Truchses passed, alone, enwrapped in the absorbing ardour of passion. How often did he change his posture during those delirious hours. How deeply did he quaff, how wildly calculate, how thoroughly enjoy! Throwing off his day-dress trappings, and in the freedom of his loose toilet robe he paced the room, flung himself into a seat, or stood at intervals before the large mirror, and gazed on his flushed and fevered image as though he sought for the reflection of his inmost heart.

The following translation of an almost illegible manuscript, handed down in traditional illustration of my hero's feelings, and undoubtedly in his hand-writing, tells all that can be now known of what he alone thought of and wrote of on that memorable night:—

I.

" Yes ! 'Twas a day of happiness, for none,
Not the most golden are without alloy ;
And through the age-like hours at times there shone,
A lightning flash of most electric joy.
Oh, it is moments such as those which pay
The mortgage-debt of fate to minds like ours !
When love breaks out unhoped-for on our way,
Shaking from rainbow-coloured wings bright showers.
Even such a passion-chequered day was this,
Of tempered suffering and redeeming bliss.

II.

" 'Twas sweet when o'er each wayward path we moved —
And wild-flowers bent, thy springy tread to meet —
Where glancing eyes just told us that we loved —
Self-speaking and self-answering ! yes, 'twas sweet,
When all was poetry in air and sky —
The wind soft murmuring in breathed rhyme
All through the beech-bough shade — by thee to lie,
Plucking the feathers from the wings of Time —
Snatching my mind's reflection in thy looks,
As trembling stars peer into midnight brooks.

III.

" How full my heart is of thee ! How it swells,
Big with thy memoried presence in its core !
Love's honey oozes from its inmost cells,
And Hope's redundant hives are flowing o'er.
My being is imbued with thee — thou art
The spirit which lightens and sublimes my clay,
The immortal essence, the diviner part,
The calm air blending with the fever'd ray
That bubbles in the foam of passion's fount —
The wreath that cools ambition's throbbing front.

IV.

" How much I love thee ! oh, how much. how much !
Could it be spanned by space, or weighed by words !
My high-strung bosom bounds at the least touch
Which even the thought of thee sends through its chords —
The very rustling of thy light robe's fold
Fills my whole frame with evidence of thine —
As liquid bronze, hot rushing through a mould,
Intensely images some form divine.

V.

" Gone ! no, thou art not gone — I see thee still —
I feel thy warm breath far down in my breast,
Warm as I drank it in, that it might fill
Each thirsty reservoir with Passion's zest —
When, in the parching ardour of Love's drouth,
As the inebriate bee untiring sips,
I quaffed the nectar of thy dewy mouth,
And sighed my soul upon thy odorous lips,
And sucked such sweets as summer flowers send up
From their heart's depths, to fill each leaf-formed cup."

CHAPTER XIII.

WE would not willingly give halt or hindrance to the current of our story. But an occasional pause is required to keep the thread from tangling. We must for a moment examine the state of feeling of some of the persons of the tale, consequent upon the events of the day just described.

Scotus, who was evidently deep bent on leading the elector onwards in his career, had from the natural, or unnatural, contortion of his mind planned a complication of causes to be brought at once into action, to hurry his intended victim into the measure most likely to ruin him with the greatest speed. A marriage with the object of his evident passion presented itself in that sure aspect. But the Italian, knowing that Nuenar, Kriechlingen, and the rest of the reformists had also that design at heart, yet doubting their or his own influence to produce so important a decision, imagined, and as has been seen acted on, the plan of bringing one or both of Agnes's brothers to the spot, under the false belief of her dishonour, reckoning that their wounded pride, which he meant by all means to inflame, would lead them to force Truchses into the only reparation left for him to make. Personally unacquainted with those brothers, yet having treasured much of the information received as to their dispositions from the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, he trusted a good deal to his own power of moulding them more completely to his views as soon as they reached the scene of action. The sudden arrival of Ernest, before he had ample time to waylay and prepare him for a meeting with Agnes and Ghebhard, had grievously disconcerted him, had he not profited by their incautious conference in the grove, the greater part of which he had listened to. By this means acquainted with, though not knowing the extent of, Ernest's secret sentiments for his sister, he felt obliged to meet him on another tack, and to hold forth Ghebhard's intention of marrying Agnes, (which he easily divined from some of his ecstatic words) as a matter of alarm instead of a subject of hope. By skilfully working up the incident of the family legend, and his own accidental likeness to the old portrait of which the duchess had told him, and by his bold avowal of

the forgery, which Ernest's manner plainly proclaimed him to suspect if not absolutely to know, he calculated on making an impression which he never doubted being able to turn to account ; and he had taken occasion during the course of the day to impress on De Mansfelt the absolute necessity of withdrawing Agnes from the elector's society — either by persuasion, stratagem, or force — knowing that her temporary loss, which he was resolved to retain the means of redeeming, would stimulate Truchses' passion a thousand fold, and hurry on the dénouement which he now saw as certain. Scotus, on the watch for every thing which might be turned in aid of his purpose, anxiously entered into the incident of the Prince of Liegnitz's arrival, and soon singling out Von Sweinishen as the principal personage of his suite, he did not fail to commence an intimacy with him, which he meant to follow up on a fitting opportunity.

Ernest de Mansfelt was filled with a horror of a pious, fraternal, and nondescript mixture, on seeing as he did too clearly the style of feeling which existed between Agnes and the elector. The few concluding words of his conference with Scotus on the terrace gave him a clue, if any were wanting, to the nature of Truchses' design ; and some broad hints, casually thrown out by Nuenar, satisfied him that the political friends of the elector were, without a knowledge of his secret intentions, labouring hard to lead him to their accomplishment. Staunch Lutheran as he was, and overmuch as he would have rejoiced at the defection of such a man from the ranks of popery, in any other case, dearly as he loved his sister, proud as he would be of her influence in any instance but this one ; the possibility of her becoming the wife of *any one* was an idea of insupportable torment to Ernest. He, in fact, loved Agnes with a romantic intensity that yet wants a definition. Awkwardly innocent in his own heart ; filled with religion according to his notion of its excellence, harbouring no thought, no feeling, that could trench on the most perfect purity of intercourse with his beloved sister, the great object of his soul was to live with her, and for her, and to preserve her to himself. He never dreamt of harm in the pledge he induced her to exchange with him ; nor was there harm in it, except from the intense selfishness and narrow-mindedness it arose from. But the man was really ignorant of what a woman's happi-

ness might require. Totally passionless himself, he knew not the privation he was forcing her to adopt. And when the moment came which showed her as the too probable partner in an amorous engagement, his self-anguish overwhelmed every consideration of her happiness and his own honour, and he resolved at all hazards to snatch her from the fate which perilled his wayward and selfish gratification. The coarseness of his mind was exemplified in his early accusation that she had listened at Spangenberg's door. The roughness of the times had its effect even on him, in an occasional violence of expression, the utterance of an oath now and then, and such-like proofs that refinement of manners had yet much progress to make. But this was compensated by a degree of frankness incompatible with the mean treacheries of a latter age. A mind of the same mould in our days would probably turn into a course of sneaking fanaticism and subdued dishonesty.

Another subject of great agitation to Ernest was the probable arrival of his brother Christopher, which he now deprecated as much as he so lately desired it. When he only thought of removing Agnes from the danger of her intimacy with the elector, such an assistant, impetuous, resolute, and active, was just what he wanted. But he also knew his brother's ambition, and had no doubt that the prospect of Agnes becoming the wife of Truchses, and thus sharing even the perilous dignity of the electoral throne, would act on him in a way the very reverse from its effects on himself. The night was therefore passed in devising plans for Agnes's removal before Christopher's arrival. But Ernest's weakness of both head and heart quite unfitted him for any enterprise requiring vigour and the possibility of stratagem. He therefore resolved to throw himself upon an alliance for this object with Scotus, but still not a little appalled at any close connexion with so *old* a friend of the family as the Italian insinuated himself to be ; for Ernest de Mansfelt, like many a good reformer of the sixteenth century, still retained a strong hereditary tinge of superstition on all matters connected with demonology and witchcraft, and though not implicitly believing the supposed magical powers and supernatural endowments of his new acquaintance, he could by no means say to himself that he laughed them to scorn, or deny that their possibility proved

a powerful attraction and gave the individual a strange influence over him. He had fixed with Scotus, in the course of the evening at Bruhl, a meeting for the following morning, and he felt no small relief at the latter having proposed that the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, his own and his sister's intimate friend, should be one of the council for thwarting the elector's design, and forcing Agnes to the adoption of measures for her own safety. Early, therefore, on the following morning, he was ready dressed to repair to his appointment with the Italian, at the rear of the elector's palace, whence they were to proceed to the private entrance of the gardens of Kriechlingen House to meet the duchess, prepared by Scotus to expect them. Devoutly did Ernest pray to heaven for aid in his purpose, and most conscientiously had he wound himself up to the belief that his own selfishness had no weight in, but that his sister's safety was the sole inspiration of, his prayers; when, to his infinite astonishment, a knock at his door was followed by a request for admittance, in Agnes's well-known voice.

He felt a throb of delight, as though heaven had delivered her into his hands; but this was as quickly succeeded by a pang of fear, lest she had come to announce a decision hostile, and perhaps destructive, to his projects. Ernest had no self-confidence, no reliance on his own resources. Weak and impious appeals to heaven, in all cases right or wrong, are the only shifts of a mind that cannot in common emergency aid itself. Heaven alone therefore knows what might have been the brother's new form of prayer, on this doubt as to his sister's feelings, had she not put an end to his apprehensions by a frank and brief avowal of them.

"You must not be surprised at my thus coming to return your visit, Ernest," said Agnes, striving to look composed and to speak cheerfully. "I only hope this interview will be more satisfactory than the last."

"Dear sister, you look wretchedly ill. Those swollen eyes and pale cheeks tell me that you have passed a sleepless night. Ah, Agnes, it is virtue alone that brings happiness. Suffering is sure to follow ——"

Guilt would have completed this profound moral axiom had not the eyes of Agnes, all tear-swollen as they were, and the flush of pride on those pale cheeks, repelled the half-uttered insult.

"I would not offend you, sister. I would solace your regret and save you from danger. My duty and my love combine to dictate words and actions which have only your well-being for their object."

"Ernest, pray spare me an argument or a sermon. I need neither. I am quite alive to my own situation, and prepared to act up to my own consciousness of right. I have resolved to leave this place forthwith. Are you ready to accompany me?"

"Ready! oh yes, to fly, instantly. We shall go together to Mansfelt, is it not so, my sister?"

"I am resolved to return to my convent. There alone I shall feel safe from my own thoughts."

"Wherever thou wilt, so as that thou quit the temptations which beset thee here. Oh, Agnes, what a weight is thus removed from my heart."

"To be added, perhaps, to the burden that oppresses mine."

"Art thou not then happy in this resolution?"

"Miserable! If not there were no merit in it, and methinks I deserve some."

"What must I understand by that?"

"What thou wilt, Ernest. It is enough for me that I know my own suffering, in taking this step to save a noble heart from the ruin it was prepared to rush into."

"What then, my sister, has he avowed his whole purpose, and hast thou really strength of mind to resist so brilliant a proposal? and has our solemn vow restrained thee? Dearest Agnes, this is more than I dared to hope."

"So heaven be my help, I know not your meaning, Ernest! Can you venture to suppose that the elector would suggest or I suffer a direct proposal of dishonour? And can the word *brilliant* apply to such?"

"You misconceive me, sister — or I spoke without clearness — my feelings agitate me — I meant to say —" stammered forth De Mansfelt, who was convinced that Truchses had not actually announced the intention vouched for by Scotus of a proposed union, which he dreaded that Agnes might be tempted to accede to.

"Your meaning, or its imperfect expression, is now not important. I am acting from no impulse but that of duty to

one who deserves my highest admiration and gratitude," said Agnes, haughtily interrupting Ernest, for she began to despise and almost dislike him. The act of communicating their secret to another had, without any spoken comment from the third person, almost magically opened her mind to the tyrannical selfishness which it arose from, and to her own weakness in being led to join in it. She was mortified at and ashamed of her share in this puerile pledge, and naturally enough threw her self-reproach into the scale which was already heavy laden with that which she flung upon her accomplice. His allusion to this vow seemed quite contemptible, at the very moment when the highest motives of self-denial and consideration for the elector's welfare had alone decided her to withdraw herself from the encouragement of his infatuated, but on that account more flattering, attachment.

To do thorough justice to our heroine it must be understood that she was actuated by the fear of danger to her own reputation, or by a dread of her own suffering, in a very faint proportion to the apprehension of ruin to the elector's peace of mind, were she not at once to check the passion she had inspired. She had a firm confidence in herself; and even in the least equivocal moment of the preceding day she instinctively saw and felt with the precision which never fails a woman, that the most profound respect blended with her lover's rapture. She was right, although she knew not that it was the fixed design of making her his own by the holiest rites of religion, at the risk or even the sacrifice of rank, state, and every consideration of worldly interest, that had worked that effect upon him. She was convinced that a passion so deeply felt and so impetuously persevered in must lead to the neglect of all those temporal and religious duties and interests involved in the elector's station. That any purpose beyond its Platonic indulgence was to be accomplished she never imagined. The forfeiture of her own honour, or the renunciation of his religion never flashed across her mind. And either one or the other was essential to the result which is the overwhelming impulse with one sex, and the admitted but uninfluencing consequence to the other.

Agnes therefore felt that she had but to fly; fervently believing that when once she was removed the elector's elastic nature would soon recover the shock of losing her, and that a

thousand resources would soon offer themselves to a mind so rich in that finest of all possessions — the power of bearing up against ill, by a prompt adaptation of what is to be obtained of good. The night on which this resolution was formed was one of much suffering. Thoughts and tears of equal bitterness flowed freely. But her firmness was unshaken. And when she came to announce her decision to her brother she had recovered in a considerable degree at least the appearance of composure. It was now quickly arranged between them that Agnes was to apply to Duchess Anne for a loan of the horse-litter, in which she had travelled to Cologne, and that after proceeding a few leagues privately in it with her tirewoman, Agnes was to send that conveyance back by the duchess's servant, and to finish her journey on horseback, Ernest undertaking to explain her sudden absence as best he might to his kinsman, the baron, and the rest of the family, to forward a letter, which she had written and now confided to him, for the elector, and to procure horses for herself and attendant, with which he was to follow with all speed so as to come up with them at the town where she had decided to sleep that night.

Ernest set about making his preparations with the utmost alacrity, chuckling at the thoughts of his having to inform Scotus of the inutility of any further efforts to attain their joint purpose. Agnes hastened to the duchess's apartment, and found her, early as it was, making ready for a morning promenade.

"Dearest Anne," said she, throwing herself into her friend's arms, and sobbing convulsively, as the suppressed force of her feelings again overpowered her; "this is a cruel leave taking, I am come to bid thee farewell — I am about to leave Cologne this very morning."

An astonished repetition of the words was the reply.

"Oh, yes, I have been here but too long. Those few short, happy weeks have been pregnant with danger, and in flight only is my chance of escape. Think me not wantonly abrupt and capricious. I must, I must be firm, and thou, dearest Anne, must aid in furnishing the means for my immediate and secret removal."

"And what has happened, my best friend, my own Agnes, to cause this sudden resolution?"

"Ask me not more than I can tell. It is enough that my brother insists on it, my own conscience approves it, and the whole happiness and welfare of another — very dear to me — imperiously commands it."

"His happiness! surely that is involved in, dependent on, your presence."

"Anne, I named no one. How art thou thus informed? But ah, why need I ask? All eyes have doubtless seen what I never thought of concealing. All tongues have made me their talk. Oh, shame, shame! How can I fly fast enough from observation and slander!"

The duchess felt herself greatly embarrassed by these words. She had not been blind to the progress of the passion, the plain evidence of which the two persons mainly interested were the last to see. She was aware all through, both from Scotus and Nuenar, of their mutual designs to encourage the attachment of Ghebhard; and she, acting from the double compliance with her tyrant's orders and with her sectarian zeal, had sedulously done all in her power to facilitate the opportunities sought for by the elector, and by no means discouraged by Agnes, for the indulgence of an intercourse which gave them such mutual delight. During the preceding evening at Bruhl, Scotus had informed the duchess of a great part of what had passed between him and Ernest, and of their intention to meet her that morning for the mock consultation, with the ostensible purpose of preventing what they both were so resolved — but from motives how different! — to promote. But she had also fixed a private rendezvous with Scotus, and by his desire, for an hour previous to that at which they were to meet Ernest. She was ignorant of what had passed between the elector and Agnes during their private promenade. She had remarked the varying emotions of the latter, and she saw clearly the warm elation of the former during the whole of the day. She knew not what conclusions to draw; and she felt now restricted from almost venturing an observation, much less pressing an explanation, which might lead her into some phrase or hint which had perhaps been at variance with the designs of him who had obtained such awful and unholy influence over her. She therefore listened to the request of Agnes for the loan of her travelling litter; she heard the plans for the journey, but she dared not all at once consent

to, or even encourage, the proposal or the project. Considerably affected, both by the evidence of Agnes's sufferings, and the consciousness of her own duplicity, she could only give vague words of comfort, in return for her friend's communication; and recommending her to proceed calmly with her preparations for the journey, she promised to see her again in an hour, and left as a matter taken for granted her co-operation in her object.

At the period of our tale there was a thick plantation of elm and oak, which stretched for several hundred yards by the side of the river, in that portion of the city now called the *Drei Konigenwerft*. It was there, amongst other places, that Duchess Anne, unattended and unobserved, and dressed with the utmost simplicity, used frequently to meet the Italian, at hours when his furtive entrance to the gardens might have been discovered by some of the inhabitants of Kriechlingen House. And as quickly as fast-walking could bring her to the rendezvous she repaired there, on Agnes quitting her; and she soon perceived Scotus gazing into the deep and rapid stream, from the embankment which partly overhung, and in other places was worn away by, the eternal waters. She approached him, apparently unobserved, and with the chill timidity of her usual manner she pronounced his name.

He turned round, and in that soft and yet insincere tone which he at times assumed, he said,

"Thou art well come, fair duchess, for had not some mighty attraction drawn me back, I verily believe I had plunged into the stream, and sought in that liquid reflection of heaven for the quiet which the experience of the earth and the study of the skies cannot procure me."

"You speak and look fearfully, Count Scotus. That placid tone and solemn air are always indescribably painful. There seems a mockery mingled with your most serious remarks, and a levity in your deepest reflections, as though you loved to sport with the things both of earth and heaven. You mean not what you say — what do you wish for on earth that is not within your reach?"

"Your love, duchess — nay, look not such alarm — your love, and I possess it not."

"Alas! you know your power over my heart and mind. Love I have not to give you. It is pledged irrevocably to my

husband. But is not your influence over me greater even than his?"

"You tell me so."

"Have I not proved it? Am I not for all lawful purposes your creature; aye, your very slave! Oh! when will this lead to good? When will your fond predictions turn to account? When am I to have my husband's affections back? When may I break from these mysterious trammels in which you have bound me?"

"I listen to you, as I always do to the witchery of your enchanting voice and eloquent words. But they fall, as ever, vainly upon my ear. You know I am not easily deceived, and yet you would continue to keep up this delusion; you reject *my* love, you profess to seek to recover the duke's; but is it not that of young Ulrick, which all the while you rejoice in? Answer me."

"Why should I answer a question ever put and always self-replying? You well know that I would not for one moment tolerate the liking of that fickle boy; but, by your commands, in the dangerous chance of causing jealousy, which you tell me will surely bring my husband again to my impatient arms."

"And so it will, fair duchess. I promise you it will."

"When, oh, when? Will you not; can you not tell me?"

"There is nothing in the face of this broad river and the glare of day in which I may read the future. But to-night, if the heavens be clear, I will consult the stars, and you shall know faithfully the result."

"'Tis always thus; vague promises of good day after day, and still no final answer."

"It is worth waiting for. The duke himself will be its bearer. In his own person, prostrate and penitent at your feet, he will prove the efficacy of the means I am taking to bring him to his duty. Persevere, then, awhile, and be patient. I pledge myself and the secrets of my art to your success."

"Heaven grant it!"

"Trust to *me*. It is not so sure that heaven is disposed to grant it. Virtue is too often doomed to suffer in this world, dear duchess; and wisdom and religion both tell us to be prepared for all results."

"Count Scotus, I *will* not doubt success. 'Tis thus at times you throw a blight on the harvest of hope you tell me to let ripen. Are you not sure of what you promise? If heaven be unpropitious, how can mortal art succeed? If any chance of failure has come upon the process of your doings, tell me so at once, and the eddies of that rushing stream are my fitting refuge!"

"It were indeed a happy resting-place for the turbulent cares of life. You seem to chime in by an unintended sympathy with my own notions. Were two beings, heart-bound to each other, but to whom fate refused an union here on earth, to plunge together in that liquid bed, methinks it were a destiny worth envying."

The accent of demoniac eagerness in which this speech was uttered made the duchess shudder. She started back from the water's side, and stepped into one of the paths leading into the depths of the grove. Scotus followed her. But even there a dread of danger chilled her heart. She looked around, for the first time during those stolen walks, in hopes of seeing some one approach. She thought she heard a suppressed laugh; and her eye attracted to her companion's face, she observed a diabolical smile, as though he rejoiced in the terror he had inspired. It was perhaps at that moment — at least during that interview — that Scotus conceived the dark purpose which he thenceforward resolved to put into execution.

"You fly me, Duchess Anne!" exclaimed the Italian, in a voice of malignant irony.

"As the bird flutters in the fowler's net, or the hooked fish struggles from the fatal line! Alas, Count Scotus, I have no chance in flight."

"Why shun me, then, and prove your unavailing repugnance? Is this wise or politic?"

"I act from impulse, not from calculation. Your words and looks have terrified me, yet surely you do not mean me harm?"

"I mean you happiness supreme — delight of which the mind can form but a small notion. Would that you were disposed to meet my views! But you shall be happy after your own choice, since my way suits you not. Rely on my zeal, and trust my power. The duke is prepared ere this to meet his new, this real, test of his affection. It cannot fail. When

he learns to dread the loss of your heart, he will certainly return to lay his at your feet."

"You re-assure me by these positive words. Ah! then, do not again mar their cheering effect by urging feelings which I cannot meet; and forbear, I implore you, to alarm me by even vague allusions, which sound more like covert threats of ill than open suggestions of relief."

"You mistake, adored duchess, the accent of despair for that of menace. You alone have forced dark thoughts into my mind, and to your rigid virtue I may become a victim: an aberration of the mind itself may be my lot. But not before I accomplish your most ardent objects. Those once complete, I may sink into the grave or plunge into the billows, and close a life not then too long if ended in your service."

A scene of tears and sobs, so admirably feigned as to have astonished the actor himself at the extent of his own powers, followed this spoken prelude. The deluded duchess was again, for the time—but it was for the hundredth—completely overpowered, softened, and convinced of the sincerity of the arch-destroyer; but the strong purpose of her heart was not shaken. She loved her truant husband with too positive a truth to run any risk from one she did not, could not, love. Scotus was supremely master of her mind. Her affections he never touched. She now reasoned with and consoled him on his apparent suffering, in terms of tenderness most irksome to the hypocrite. The scene had lasted too long for his patience. But he found such requisite at times to keep up his influence, through the double medium of compassion and vanity, for each had a large share in his victim's facility to be deceived.

At length he turned abruptly to the subject of most immediate interest to him.

"But let me break from this too selfish indulgence of my immediate woe," said he, dashing away some ready-coming tears. "The interest and the happiness of others must not be forgotten. That is my consolation and recompense. Your friend Countess Agnes, I came to talk of her, to devise means for her good, and that of my generous friend the elector, not to torment you with another scene of my despair. Yesterday was the close of their probation. Ghebhard is wildly in love. He never slept last night. His perturbed feelings robbed his couch of its tenant. This morning he has sunk to rest, worn out by

his excitement. We must now urge on his cause. But to do so effectively much management is required with that troublesome brother, whose coming here has proved an obstruction rather than a help. But I have a plan matured ; and first, fair duchess, you must see the countess, and sound her as to what passed between her and her lover in the grove."

" I have already seen her."

" Indeed ! this morning ? "

" Yes, she came to announce her departure from Cologne to-day."

" Her departure ! what ! I have not heard you rightly, duchess, or you have mistaken her. By heavens, you are dull of apprehension ! she meant not that. Speak, speak quickly, and clearly, on this manner. Tell me what passed between ye, word for word ; more interests than one or two are hanging in suspense. Speak ! "

To this impatient and almost brutal summons Duchess Anne meekly replied, by stating in a subdued tone the particulars of her morning conversation with Agnes ; and adding the truth, that fear of thwarting the Italian's views had restrained her from prolonging the interview, entering into details, or giving any decided answer to her friend.

Scotus was silent while the duchess spoke. His folded arms, knit brows, and lips compressed, told how he pondered on her words.

" Yes — that will do ! my whole project is fixed — this is a lucky turn — now listen to me," exclaimed he ; and the breathless attention of the duchess was accordingly given to him, as he spoke half in soliloquy, half colloquy ; for he was for a moment lost in most unusual abstraction.

" Yes, we must consent to, urge on, and aid in her withdrawal — not her departure quite. To lose sight of her awhile, to believe her lost to him, will drive the amorous elector almost mad. To regain her he will come to any terms. Ay, even to see her he will pay any price. To see her ? and by my influence. But not to speak with her — no, that must not be. To see her in some mysterious and magic-seeming way. Excited, worked up to passion's bent — all this may be done ! now listen to me, duchess."

" I am listening."

" And what have you heard ? "

" Nothing distinctly of your muttered words, but that we must encourage my friend's departure."

" No, not her departure ; but she must be withdrawn. For a day or two, more it may be, or perhaps less. I must see how her absence will work, and how it can be turned to best account—for the elector's happiness and hers—you know these are my only motives?"

" I can imagine none other."

" Except the pride and joy of serving you, fair duchess, through your friend."

The involuntary blush and smile which arose at this insinuating sentence were the only answers Scotus required—he saw that the way was prepared for his next proposition, and thus continued:—

" To act effectually in this good cause I must have your assistance. To bring matters to a crisis some stratagem is required ; for the delicate qualms of Agnes, or Truchses' impetuous ardour, if not rightly managed, might defeat my plans, and overthrow the fabric which I would raise for their own rapture. I may reckon on your aid?"

" My feeble means are always ready at your bidding, and for my dear friend's welfare-sake."

" Well then ! now for one serious question, put for a frank and honest answer—you have confided to Countess Agnes the affair of the jewels?"

" Never, so help me Heaven !" was the firm reply of the duchess, while she gave back a fearless look to the Italian's penetrating glance, and her heart leaped with joy at the prudent reserve she had maintained.

" Then you have kept our secret well and wisely. But you must reveal the whole transaction to her this morning, without delay—my projects hang on her knowing all."

This startling command was a new spring of pleasure to the duchess. She would have spoken, but Scotus proceeded.

" All, you must tell her all, without reserve. And then you must with your whole eloquence, with tears, if they can spring as in most women at command—how different from man's rugged nature, to whom weeping is almost worse than death—but let that pass—you must use flattery, Duchess Anne, entreaties of all kinds if she prove stubborn, to gently force her consent to accompany you to my apartments at the

palace, for the purpose of persuading me to restore those jewels back to your possession. You understand me? I speak clearly?"

"Oh, yes; but I am bewildered by your words. How can I fulfil this intricate purpose of yours, and why? Must I denounce *you* to Agnes—lower myself to base deception—and lead her to what I dare not utter nor think on. I *know* you cannot, must not insist on this."

"Indeed, indeed I must, and you must do it. But first to lay the phantoms you have conjured up. I would not have you quite *denounce* me, but you must tell the facts, as to my becoming possessed of and keeping back the jewels. You must assure your friend that my esteem and admiration of her virtue, and—yes, yes, you may add her beauty, there is not much risk of that offending her—ensure her an influence that will be irresistible, and moreover I swear to you, most unbelieving duchess, that it shall be so, and that I will place the precious caskets with their entire contents, even as I had them from you, freely in Countess Agnes's hands, in trust for you their rightful owner. Nay, look not doubtingly still—I swear it, by heaven and earth, and all things they contain, including you, the loveliest thing on the one, and the sure inheritor of the other!"

Duchess Anne clasped her hands upon her breast to keep down the throbbings of her delight.

"Is not this object, joined to your dear friend's happiness, worth some trouble, some cost of words, and even a little innocent exaggeration, soft flattery, or the like? Nothing short of this can persuade Agnes to come to the palace—I know that well—and her coming is the price of your recovered treasures, for otherwise I honestly tell you you receive them not."

"Oh, she shall come if it depend on me. She will, I am sure, of her own free choice, when I tell her the double purpose, my peace of mind regained and her own happiness honourably secured."

"Hold, hold, duchess, you go too fast, though not too far. These are the sure results of the visit I propose, but she is not to know that any design in her own favour is in question. Pride, honour, dignity, and what not, would be all up, in a masquerade of imagined virtue, to prevent the step if she be-

lieved it to be for her interest, even though joined with yours. Men rarely mistake false delicacy for the real. Women eternally. There is not one in ten of your squeamish sex who has courage enough to pursue her own advantage at the risk of a false construction on her actions. No, it is for you, and you alone, that Agnes is to accede to this measure, which will make her in the long run Electress of Cologne."

"And you will place *all* the jewels in her possession?"

"What duchess! Have you then no thought for your friend? Is not her happiness a jewel of price, and do I not promise also to secure that?"

"Oh, I do rejoice in aught that brings good to her, but doubly if it be joined with my own."

"Now then, dear duchess, speed you to your task. I go to seek the brother and turn him from his purposed departure. He shall communicate to his sister the necessity for delay, and then the plot shall thicken!"

The duchess was already gone. Scotus marked her with a fiendish smile, as she tripped lightly through the grove. But she suddenly turned round and approached him, almost running. He met her half way.

"Alas! in my selfish joy I had forgot one point vital to my friend's honour, and indeed on which I am sure her consent to accompany me to the palace would completely hinge. You pledge yourself solemnly that she is not to see the elector? To risk no chance of indignity or disgrace? And discovery of our visit would lead to both."

"*That* I swear solemnly. And the best guarantee to satisfy your doubts or hers is the fact that my whole object would be defeated were she to be discovered—even by Truchses himself."

"Enough, I am now satisfied. Farewell, count, I shall wait your next summons with intense impatience."

"You shall have it, duchess, but *when* depends on the slow or rapid march of circumstances and feelings not quite in my control.—But hold, I too have a second thought on this affair. You must not finally make your request for your friend's interference till I see you, which shall be within an hour at Kriechlingen House. See her in the interim—sound her, make your *confession*, but no direct appeal to her assist-

ance. There is something yet to be done, which, if it succeed, will make her consent a certainty."

The colloquists then quitted the grove in different directions.

CHAPTER XIV.

As the Italian proceeded to the place of his appointment with Ernest de Mansfelt, he observed a stranger—but one whose name and race he instantly knew, as surely as though he had seen his baptism certificate and pedigree before him—riding up one of the narrow streets a handsome but jaded horse, and followed by a varlet, on another equally valuable and equally tired.

"Well done, Count Jerome!" inwardly exclaimed Scotus. "Yet thou hast after all small merit perhaps, since these dolts and dupes will play so easily into thy hands. Yes, this is one of a different stamp. He must be managed by other means. Never mind, I'll manage him!"

He followed for a few minutes the slow movements of the cavalier, and saw him alight at a hostel, over the door of which hung the rudely-painted sign of a robust and rubicund angel, with a pair of flame-coloured wings, so huge and heavy that the whole might be taken for an effigy of Sampson carrying the gates of Gaza on his back. The host, who was a Spaniard long domiciliated at Cologne, came pompously from his porch, after some impatient calls from the young stranger, and bowed him into the house with much ceremony, while the varlet, guided by a stable-boy, led the horses into the courtyard. Scotus then proceeded to his rendezvous close to the palace; and there he met Ernest waiting, an air of satisfaction tempering his nervous anxiety. Scotus approached him, with a gesture of astonishment, and exclaimed in a tone of well-feigned alarm,

"What! Here! Thank Heaven I meet you still safe! It is then as I feared—you have not received my letter?"

"Letter! no."

"Nor seen my secretary?"

"No."

"And your sister — is *she* still safe? not yet seized?"

"Seized! What mean you, Count Scotus?"

"Are you then indeed ignorant of all that is passing? Do you not know that your plan of departure is discovered — how or by whom betrayed it is for you to judge! — that every outlet of the city is beset by the tyrant's myrmidons — that you are destined to a dungeon, and your sister to the blandishments of Bruhl, and at the best which may befall her, a marriage, perhaps after all a mock ceremony, with this prince-bishop, who has dared even to threaten me with punishment for my remonstrances? You have heard nought of this?"

"Not a word — but how ——"

"Ah, Ghebhard, thou art more cunning than I thought consistent with thy daring! It is clear, Count Mansfelt, that you were not to be molested in the town, for fear of publicity, but pounced on as soon as you pass the faubourg, and then surely disposed of. How lucky it is that my warning does not come too late. Now we have not a moment to lose. I have your safety provided for. Come along, we must not be observed."

"And Agnes, what of her?"

"Indeed that may be well asked, what of her? Who gave notice to the elector of her pretended flight? Who offered the hint of an arrest upon the road? Ah, Count Ernest, you share the dim-sightedness of all virtuous men. You know nothing of woman's wiles."

"It is impossible. She could not play so false a game. And for what purpose?"

"How else but by yielding to an assumed violence excuse the breach of her solemn vow, and become the wife of another?"

"God in heaven! Agnes, then, has told you of our pledge? Infamous, infamous!"

"No, count, before Heaven, to whom you appeal, she never did!"

"But yet ——"

"I know of it — ay, and much more of you and yours. Ask me not ever for the source of my knowledge, but now least of all, no time must be lost in concealing you and securing her!"

" I must see her instantly."

" Then you must be prepared for loss of liberty — or to lead her to the arms of this amorous elector."

" What a cruel dilemma ! Why is not my brother here ?"

" He *is* here, and labouring heart and hand to hurry on this impious, this unnatural union, which will tear Agnes for ever from you."

" I thought he would. This is the crowning blow of fate ! What now may be done ? Count Scotus, I throw myself wholly upon you."

" And safely may you do so. I have the will, and the means, to save her and you. Come on !"

" Where would you lead me ?" cried Ernest, starting back after they had proceeded a few yards, on his companion stopping and applying a key to a small wicket in the wall of the palace garden.

" To the only place where there is safety for you in Cologne — to my own apartments in the electoral palace."

" How ! into the very den of my arch-enemy ! what does this mean ?"

And as Ernest uttered this faint expression of the doubts and fears which rushed upon his mind, his hand, as irresolute as his head was weak, half moved towards his sword.

" Out with it boldly, and at once, count, and if it need a sheath, plunge it here into this breast, already too deeply wounded by the suspicions which now dishonour me — no, not me, but *you*. But I can and ought to bear with any of your race ! Yet ere it is too late give yourself a moment's pause for thought. Where can you be so safe, so unsuspected, as in the sanctuary of *my* chamber, which no one dares to violate ? Which of the furious creatures of its owner would dream of seeking you in their master's very palace ? But do you doubt my honour ? If so, say it frankly — and then farewell ! I can pardon even that from a descendant of Polrath de Mansfelt. But then you may indeed draw your sword, and fling away the scabbard. For Henry of Liegnitz and his rabblement, by this time the hired mercenaries of Truchses, will be soon upon you, and will give your weapon ample work."

" I know not what to think or do," said the uncertain Ernest.

"Then be guided by one who has thought and action at command. You have but two courses — certain ruin, or a chance of safety. Which will you follow? Hark! by heavens the Reitres are already out — they come this way — I hear the trampling of their horses. I must not be suspected of being leagued with you for no purpose. To carry the great end we have both in view I am ready to brave danger in any shape; but to be seized on like a puling girl shall never be *my* fate. Farewell, Count Mansfelt! They come — save yourself now as best you may."

A hurried movement of the key in the lock of the wicket accompanied these words; and as the Italian entered, his companion forced himself close upon and almost past him into the garden.

"My mind is made up — I throw myself wholly on your honour — you will act fairly by me, I am sure," said Ernest, in much agitation. Scotus answered by a smile, to which Ernest gave on the instant half-a-dozen different constructions. Just then laughter and the chorus of a loose song burst from the band of Liegnitz's recruits, who passing by chance beneath the wall, little dreamed of the sensation they had caused at the other side.

"Miscreants!" exclaimed Scotus, "how they revel in the hopes of your destruction!"

"Hush, hush! let us seek your apartment, count, if we may indeed do so safely."

"Fear nothing — while with me you are invisible," replied Scotus, leading the way through a dark damp avenue of yew and laurel trees, which led, without any opening on the less sombre parts of the garden, to the wing in which his ground-floor suite of rooms was situated. In a few minutes he and his unwilling visitor were in that room where the short scene between the elector and the Italian took place on the night the latter arrived in Cologne, and from which a private passage communicated into Ghebhard's own sleeping apartments. There Scotus set to work with all his ingenuity, to tranquillise the fears of Ernest as to his own safety, and to assure him of the certainty of his being able to protect Agnes and bring them together for the purpose of effecting their escape. To set her mind at rest as to her brother's situation, the latter wrote her a few hasty lines, at the Italian's dictation, telling

her to confide in all things to his generous friend Count Scotus, over whom she possessed great influence, and who would take every measure for her protection and for their joint evasion. Scotus placed this letter carefully in his doublet; and he then gave his prisoner (for such in fact Ernest's weakness had made him) into the care and keeping of his youthful but most prudent-looking secretary, with orders to provide him with refreshments and, as far as was possible, with amusement, until Scotus should return. To Ernest's reiterated inquiry as to his security from intrusion on the part of Ghebhard or his satellites, the Italian replied by a profusion of oaths and protestations, on this occasion of real sincerity. "But in case of the worst," said he, "look here — is there not wherewithal here to enable you to defend yourself, and to die like a hero on heaps of your slaughtered enemies?"

With these words he opened a large chest, which was literally crammed with weapons of every possible form consistent with the strength of one man to wield. Matchlocks, falchions, pistols, daggers, axes, and a profuse display of powder and bullets, met Ernest's gaze. But it is doubtful — for he was never tried — whether his spirit was of that sort which leads iron-nerved men to do a desperate deed alone. He would, like most others, have been sufficiently ready to bear his part in a *mêlée*. But the single-hearted courage which Scotus appealed to is not the lot of even every gallant warrior.

The Italian next proceeded — it was a busy morning for him — to Kriechlingen House. A visit to the ladies after the previous day's excursion was but natural. But he soon contrived to see the duchess alone; and he was well pleased to learn that she had commenced the execution of her mission in the way prescribed, and had so far succeeded in her object as to have greatly affected Agnes by her recital, and to have drawn from her a voluntary expression of regret that the immediate necessity for her flight prevented the possibility of her interfering for the restitution of the jewels.

"Good, good!" exclaimed Scotus, as the duchess ceased, "all now is right. Give her this billet from her brother. But read it first — it is as you see unsealed. It will tell you of the extension of my influence. He has consented to put off the journey for to-day; and is now in a secure retreat. Agnes must immediately quit this house, and you along with her.

Come out as if for a mere walk in the garden, dressed plain, even to homeliness. Pass through the private door on the outer terrace—you shall find it unlocked—proceed directly to the floating bridge, cross the river, and then repair to our sometime place of meeting, the farmhouse in the valley of roses. There ye can safely rest till dusk. Ere it is totally dark, you shall hear my thrice-repeated whistle. Come out alone to meet me in the copse. I will then fix the hour for your and Agnes's visit."

"Can she not see you *then*—and there make the appeal on which you place such stress, and which is to procure the restitution?"

"Ah, duchess, duchess, again self, only self, and those poor baubles, so worthless in comparison with the fate of your dear friend, which hangs, I tell you again, on her coming to the palace."

"'Tis too true; I had forgotten that; and even now I despair of her consent to such a step."

"Do you think her brother's presence in my apartment could induce her?"

"Oh, yes, no doubt; but how?"

"Leave that to me. I promise you an invitation to her from his hand to meet him there. Is that enough?"

"Heaven grant it may be!"

"Now, then, to complete your task. Be quick and prudent." And again the confederates separated.

About the same time Ghebhard Truchses, having passed some hours in a deceitful semblance of repose, had risen in that state of unrefreshed, yet by no means fatiguing excitement, so common to ardent lovers. The turmoil of the preceding day still kept up his fever of joy, more nourishing than exhausting; at least the feelings of such a time seem to themselves as though they were never to be worn out. Buoyant, bounding, fresh-dipped, as it were, in a river of eternal youth, his mind seemed to fly through the vast regions of thought as a wild bird cleaves the air. His person, true to the mysterious sympathy, felt active and elastic. His eyes were bright, his voice clear and mellow, every nerve seemed firmly yet lightly braced. He felt invincible.

It was in this mood that the elector received the early visits of Nuenar and Kriechlingen, with Count Solms, Baron Win-

neburg, the Dome Provost Count George of Wittingstein, and some other members of the chapter of Cologne, all but avowed Protestants, but every one of them resolved to force matters at length to a crisis with the sovereign, who was not only the choice of their affection, but now the sheet-anchor of their hopes. These individuals, as the leaders of the reform party, had, ever since the opening of the congress, some weeks before, played a deep but steady game with regard to Truchses. Encouraging him, as has been seen, in the passion which had obtained such hold of his mind, leaving him to the almost magical influence which a desperate adventurer was day by day twining round him, they also kept him in total ignorance of the intrigues that were brought actively into play against him by the efforts of his various colleagues of the conference. Every one, friend or foe, seemed to combine for the one great purpose, of placing the elector in such a position as would force him to avow his attachment to the reformed doctrines, and put him at once into an attitude of hostility against both the pope and the emperor, his spiritual and temporal chiefs.

Matters to his injury had gone to much greater lengths than either Truchses or his adherents suspected. The representations forwarded both to Vienna and Rome, with all the virulence of envy and malice, had met a prompt attention ; and at this very epoch an envoy from one place, and a nuncio from the other, were close to Cologne, armed with all the powers of remonstrance ; and, as a last resort, with all the thunder of civil and ecclesiastical anathema.

Ernest of Bavaria, the expectant bishop of Liege, was not far off. Aided by his emissaries in the city, he was by all possible means fomenting the hostility of the bigoted conservative party among the burghers, against the man whose only object was, through their enlightenment, to effect the removal of abuses and the happiness of the people at large. The political situation of the electorate and its chief was thus at a point of most critical importance. His state of moral feeling has been already described. No individual ever touched a crisis more completely decisive of his fate in all its combinations.

Truchses met the members of the deputation with a more than half-way readiness, almost anticipated their views, acceded to their hints, and finally satisfied them that, fully aware of the extensive conspiracy for some time hatching for

his ruin, he had taken large measures of precaution to meet and combat it.

Astonished at this proof of vigorous forethought, while they believed him to have been sunk in the lazy voluptuousness of love, they marvelled as to the source of his information. And at this period of the interview, Prince Henry of Liegnitz was introduced by the elector's special orders. His appearance somewhat startled the deputation, to all of whom, except Nuenar, he was totally unknown. But they soon became reconciled to roughness of demeanour, and a doubtful character, in honour of the homage paid, then as now, to rank — and of the avidity which now and at all times leads human nature to adopt whatever may conduce to its own interests.

It was not Truchses' design to let his adherents know that the chance-coming of the Prince of Liegnitz was the first and only source of his knowledge on the points now discussed. He meant rather to let them believe by implication that he had for some time been himself the heart and soul of the prince's movements; that the new levies had been actually raised on his account; and that he and the sovereign adventurer, of whose aid he was resolved to avail himself, were older acquaintances than any one thought. In the course of this council all present were satisfied that Truchses was a being of still higher powers than they had before given him credit for, for even Nuenar was staggered as to his connexion with Liegnitz, and admitted to himself that, even if the scene of the preceding day at Bruhl was precisely what it seemed to be, his friend Ghebhard had turned it to an account, which none but a man of a high order of genius for politics could have done: and so it is. The power of promptly seizing a truth, a fact, an opportunity, of adapting ourselves to it, and it to our purposes, is the true test of genius in all its high behests. The dull enlightenment of the mass of public men is as total darkness, compared to the lightning flashes of the eye of talent.

The elector-archbishop of Cologne was on this occasion pronounced, by those friends who knew him best and saw him closest during the whole period of his reign, to be more than equal to the emergency; for he amply proved himself one of those great spirits which rise with circumstances, too buoyant to sink beneath, too brave to shrink from the flood. Truchses gave a new inspiration to all present. The reader need not be

told again where he had found his own ; and no set form of words needs do new homage to the passion from which it sprung—the source of true grandeur in minds essentially great.

Plans of serious import, a system of organisation for the electoral resources, an estimate of the available force both native and mercenary, the form of an appeal to the Lutheran princes of the empire, to Henry of Navarre, and the other chiefs of the French Huguenots, to William Prince of Orange, to Elizabeth of England, were among the matters debated. Besides which, the Prince of Liegnitz, who was not admitted into those more secret details, made a statement of his force, his projects for augmenting it, a calculation of expenses, and the terms of engagement on which he was willing to transfer the floating capital of his alliance into the service of Cologne. Various preliminaries decided, other points adjourned, but all more or less disposed of, the council broke up ; and Ghebhard Truchses, then resuming those higher attributes of his character before explained, divested his mind at once and completely of all associations of public business, opened the door for the imprisoned secrets of his heart, and let them all rush out like a flight of seraphim, dazzling with their brightness and freshening with their wings the broad heaven of his happiness. Proud of the dangers that beset him, despising the meanness or defying the might of his enemies, neither reckoning on nor refusing the aid of friends, but relying wholly and boldly on himself, he harnessed his mind as it were for battle, in the glorious panoply of courage, and under the resplendent banner of love. His toilet arranged in all the profuse elegance of expense and taste, his sprig of heath-blossom placed over his heart, and over it within his doublet's fold the clearly copied manuscript of his last night's labour, he took his place in his carriage, and, as usual, with but slight attendance, he took his way over the oft-beaten track which led to Kriechlingen House.

CHAPTER XV.

THE hostel of "The Angel" was one of those open houses, wild, straggling, comfortless, yet well-stored and largely frequented, which were common to the epoch of our tale, and which have been, from frequent descriptions, both by master and apprentice hands, long made familiar to the great mass of readers. A huge fire in the wide chimney all the year round, food and liquor adapted for all seasons, and ready for most tastes, extortion as the rule and fair dealing the exception, a forced welcome for all comers, a total indifference for those who went away, a constant resort of company, too loose to be bound by any rules or made subject to classification, such was the hostel. And the host? why, he was like most other innkeepers in all ages and countries, but particularly like the generality of those who followed the right worshipful calling in his own times. By name José Arezega, by birth a Murcian, by profession a soldier, he had seen a great deal of life in its many vicissitudes, but never had such close opportunities of observing it as in the varied specimens of character which presented themselves to him in quick succession now. He was well to do in the world; but was not likely to be a bit more honest or humane from being above want. The harshest rogues are not those of the highways or the hovel.

The young stranger who had arrived that morning was very soon afterwards fast asleep in one of the best beds; and the best are and were always bad in a German inn. It was short and narrow beyond any fair medium estimate of man's proportion or disproportion, with linen loosely flung on, and the most insidious instrument of sleeping torture that ever was invented, in the shape of a swan's-down stuffed silk sack, which no ingenuity can balance for an hour together on the body it is meant to give warmth too, and which at the very first twitch of the most wholesome sleeper is sure to tumble off, leaving the victim in that state of lazy irritability, which makes him curse the cold and the chambermaid, but totally prevents his having the energy to jump out of bed and pick up his "coverlid." But the traveller now in question bade defiance to all such discomforts. His legs found places outside of the bed, since there was no room for them within; he

rolled the sheets round him, and rolled them off in his random unconsciousness ; and as for the *plumeau*, it lay far out on the floor after the very first kick which settled him into slumber. His riding clothes were flung in a heap close by ; his rapier was on the table near at hand, with a small leathern bag containing money, a chain of gold, and some other ornaments which stamped the owner to be a man of station ; and any one who might have peeped at him while he lay stretched in sleep (perhaps the chambermaid did) would have acknowledged him to be a youth of great personal beauty. There was a slight contraction on his brow and a curl on his lip, even while he dreamed, that spoke character at least. His horses were in the meantime also sleeping* in their liberal supply of litter ; and his varlet had laid his head on the saddle-bags, and snored away refreshingly under the manger.

At every scream of the rough maids, and every bang of the doors, which accompanied the household work, Don José, as he was called familiarly, hollowed fiercely out for silence, and thundered forth imprecations on the noise-makers in accents that far out-noised their greatest clamour. The don moreover spoke atrocious bad German, at which all his servants made it a point to laugh most boisterously ; so that between the boorish indifference of the household and the angry remonstrance of the host, the stranger had every possible chance afforded him of being awake. But he defied it all. He slept on. And so we leave him for awhile.

It was in the midst of one of those noisy efforts to obtain silence that Don José was struck by the appearance of a gentleman close at his elbow, who, the moment he could make himself heard, requested (in Spanish so pure that the host took him for a countryman of his own) to be shown to a private chamber where he could await till the stranger cavalier who arrived that morning on the roan gelding might be ready to receive his name.

"A chamber you shall have, kind *senor*," responded the host, in his ordinary tone of pompous civility ; "a chamber such as his omnipotent majesty, the king of our own blessed and glorious Spain, might be happy to repose in ; but I fear that you will have to wait a long time before the cavalier in question is awake."

"Could you not call him ? or have him called ?"

"Truly, good senor, I might give my orders to Herman Klotz, my head-waiter, and he would in due obedience send up to the sleeper's chamber Lena, or Katrine, or Laura Schwartz, or any other of my numerous under-servants ; but it would assuredly be as much as the life of the poor wretch so sent was worth ; for the stranger swore that whoever disturbed him should feel at least an ell of his rapier's blade pass clear through their body on the spot."

"He is choleric it would seem?"

"I should say so, senor, as far as I may judge ; and I hope it is no flattery to say I am no small judge of human character. And when I see a man fume and fret, and imprecate with curses on his lips and frowns on his front, and can get from him in half an hour but haughty looks and angry words, I always make a shrewd guess that he is not of a mild temper, or that——"

"Something has ruffled it?"

"Exactly so, senor, you have hit it to a hair. Your highness has no doubt yourself seen much of life ; and, therefore, you will, perhaps, be pleased to order some slight refreshment ——"

"To prove that I know how to ensure the welcome of a hostel-keeper ! So ! bring wine——Malvoisie, and let me talk with thee mine host."

"Herman Klotz !" roared out the Spaniard, in his highest key major ; and on the appearance of the *Kelner* he ordered him to fetch a flask of the very best Malvoisie which lay under the wings of the angel. He in the meantime led the way into a dark and dingy room within the kitchen, declaring it to be of his best for privacy and honourable decoration. His eulogy on the furniture passed unheeded by his guest. The wine was soon on the board, with two deep, broad-topped, thick-lipped glasses, bedaubed with the flaunting badges of the electorate in gaudy combinations of yellow, green, and red. Just as the *Kelner* applied the corkscrew, a clattering sound of boots and rapiers on the kitchen floor attracted the attention of Don José, who made his excuses, and strided forth majestically, followed by his head-waiter Herman Klotz. The stranger then closed the door, gently but not completely, and not being able to see through the panels, he quietly put his ear to the opening.

"Welcome, thrice welcome, my magnanimous senors! The clash of the scabbard is a cheering sound (until time comes to brandish the blade), to the ears of an old soldier. What can I or my hostelrie do for the honourable service of so gallant a company?" said the host, in his most superfine German, to some four or five swaggering, and swash-buckler-looking persons, who could have been at once recognised by any of those who saw the company of the captains' table at Bruhl the preceding day.

"Why, you can give us good cheer, and I hope at a reasonable charge," replied Ritter Heinrich, the title by which Von Sweinishen was ordinarily known among his comrades.

"If there is honour out of Spain or honesty in Cologne, you are now at the fountain-head of both — though I am no boaster — my noble senors."

"Then let's see if we cannot strike a bargain at once. We are here ten of us altogether in this good city, captains in the levies of the most noble and mighty the sovereign Prince Henry of Liegnitz, himself well known for the most promising customer that ever shed joy over the happy countenance of a hostel-keeper, and who thinks no more of the price that is put upon what he purchases ——"

"Than most other princes do of paying it. I know the character of his highness, my brave senor, and I hope his officers follow his example in some things — at a great distance," said the Spaniard with an air of cold impertinence, greatly different from what he wore a minute before. Two or three of the captains muttered a curse and murmured a menace, one twisted his mustachios, another swung round his long red beard which streamed meteor-like before him, a third struck the point of his scabbard forcibly on the tiled floor. Don José stood and looked quite indifferent to those various symptoms; and Ritter Heinrich interposed to put an end to any attempt at blustering on the part of his comrades.

"Good friend," said he, "a licence to sell liquor is no warrant for a loose tongue. His highness is a noble and generous prince and a brave soldier. But we are not here to condescend to plead his cause with every babbler, but to make a bargain for our gracious master's nourishment and that of his suite. Let's then to the point — let's stick to it, for that's the way to do business."

"Agreed, senor. What then is your will?"

"To know for what daily sum you will furnish board and lodging of your best for his highness and those who are honoured by serving him. You may take time to reflect while we drink success to 'The Angel' in a gallon of Rhine wine. Let it be brought."

"Herman Klotz! set a gallon measure of the forty-six, with glasses for these noble gentlemen. I promise ye, senors, the flavour of my forty-six will leave a smack on your palates that it would take a cask of such trash as ye drank last night at 'The Holy Trinity' to efface. Now as to the prices I need no thinking. I have them at my fingers' ends — in one sense I mean, no offence, senors, I hope; but in another, that is as regards payment, I have a way of touching my lodgers' money beforehand."

"As for that, friend, it's all the same to his highness whether he pays to-day or to-morrow."

"Just what I had heard of him, senor — so now for my prices. A crown and a half a-day for his highness and each of those noble persons who dine at his table; half-a-crown for every other officer; and nine groschen per varlet, with a bed for every two men, two good meals for each, wine included; and two flasks extra before going to sleep, as a parting cup towards a good night's rest."

"A fair offer, if the treatment be good. It's a bargain," said Von Sweinishen. "We begin from this day; so get your rooms ready and have a dinner dressed forthwith. We've not had many words about it — Good morning, host! Expect us at noon."

"Not many, senor, but there is one to be added. I told you I expected payment in advance. I stand to my conditions; you can calculate the amount."

"You are indeed an old soldier, good mine host," replied the accustomed financier-general of his highness of Liegnitz, "and I will even humour thee, but after mine own fashion. It is not customary to walk the streets with a purse full of crowns wagging at one's rapier's side. But here, take this chain — it is of sterling gold and the gift of my father — take it to some congenial Jew and get an advance of a hundred crowns on it. But look sharp to the lender, I know the number of links, and by the thunder of heaven I will have an

ear each, from you and your household, for every one that may be missing when I redeem the pledge !”

With these words he flung his chain on the kitchen-table and left the hostel with his comrades.

“Come hither, landlord !” whispered the stranger from the chamber within ; while José, somewhat alarmed by the Ritter Heinrich’s fierce threat, and constitutionally cautious on all matters of bargain and sale, was dangling the massive chain in his hands, calculating its weight and counting the links. Hearing the call, he exclaimed,

“Pardon, pardon, senor ! By the life of my saint I had forgotten your excellency altogether ; but I am now ready to do justice to your most worshipful invitation, and to show you how I relish a flask of true Malvoisie flavoured by the honour of such good company.”

“You have made a good bargain for the interests of the Angel, my friend — those gallants are no higglers for a price — you will make a round profit in a week or two by their custom.”

“Of that I doubt, senor. I am not exorbitant, but I might, it is true, have abated somewhat of my first demand ; and I have studied the human character to small purpose if I have not discovered that the customer who makes no price is often he who makes no payment.”

“But in this case you are secured.”

“That’s as it may be, senor. How do I know what metal this chain is made of ? How do I know its worth ? And how can I go seek a loan on it and at the same time have preparation made to feed these hungry adventurers ?”

“Make your mind easy on that head, mine host. Here is a purse with much more than the sum required. Take forth the gold ; I will take charge of the chain, and advance double the amount in question as security for its safety.”

“Well, that *does* save trouble and lighten risk,” added José, counting out the gold pieces to the whole amount involved in the stranger’s offer.

The latter rolled the chain into one of his side pockets, placed the purse back in his girdle, and then desired the host, who had already quaffed a couple of bumpers, to show him the way to the young stranger’s chamber, taking on himself all the risk of disturbing him.

The don, impressed with an awful sense of his new customer's importance, wealth, and hardihood, offered no objection; and soon placed him in the corridor opposite the stranger's door, through the chinks of which most audible signals of sleeping security were sent forth. A firm knock against the panel was echoed by an exclamation of awakening surprise. The "who's there?" was answered by the turning of the clumsy key which had remained outside; and the stare of the one stranger starting up in his bed was met by the courtly salutations of the other who stood beside it.

"This is no time for ceremony, Count Christopher; I come from your sister," said the latter.

"Have I still a sister or one I may own as such? and who are you, that come so abruptly on her part?" exclaimed the younger De Mansfelt, endeavouring to recal his senses to their waking uses.

"You *have* a sister certainly, and one that few men would hesitate about claiming — one who may be a sovereign princess within four-and-twenty hours, if you manage well. Who I am is of no consequence. I am your friend and hers. You shall know my name in due time."

"You take a high tone, sir stranger; and by my good sword, which lies there hiltwards to my grasp, I am doubting whether to pass it through your body, or to offer you my hand in the pledge of mutual service!"

The stranger drew off his glove, and stretched forth a hand, every finger of which was loaded with rings, antique and modern. Christopher de Mansfelt had no longer any hesitation. He shook the proffered hand heartily, and begged, in the name of good fellowship, that the stranger would sit down beside him, and enter quickly on the matter of his errand, first telling him how Agnes knew of his arrival in Cologne.

"A figure and face like yours, Count Christopher, was not likely to pass through the streets unobserved; and the living likeness of Agnes de Mansfelt spoke your name too plainly for mistake."

"They say I resemble her," said the brother, smiling and running his hand involuntarily across his face and through his hair. "But what of her? I burn with impatience."

"Tempered by vanity," thought Scotus — it was needless to announce him to the reader by name. "Why this,"

added he aloud, "that she is now concealed by the elector, her ——"

"Paramour! That is the word. And if I blush in speaking it, it is from rage not shame — *that* shall be stifled in my revenge."

"You are too hasty. I would have said her lover."

"'Tis all the same — there is no need of mincing matters now."

"Permit me again to check your ardour. Your sister is as yet innocent — in the world's eye at least, except in having listened to the seducer at all."

"Innocent! I have proofs of her guilt, ay under her own hand, sent me by some kind friend of our family."

"Some warm-worded billet, perhaps, written in the careless confidence of girlhood?"

"No, my sister is not of that stamp. It was the ardent confession of her crime. Would I might know the author of the friendly warning that brought me here!"

"You do know him, you have given him the grasp of amity. He is, as he has told you, your friend."

"By heavens, I thought it was you the moment you entered the room! Had it not been for that instinctive feeling I might now have been wiping your blood from my blade, for I swore to put to death whoever might disturb me!"

"A rash vow rightly broken. Now are you ready to make a new one, to force this archbishop and arch-profligate to do honourable reparation to your sister's *risked* honour — I use no positive word?"

"Am I ready? What brought me here faster than a hired courier? Why have I snatched this scant repose but to brace my arm for the deed? By heavens the seducer shall die!"

"Or marry Agnes!"

"Marry her! yes, that *would* be better — and you said something erewhile about her becoming a sovereign princess? What must I do? You come from her. Tell me her wishes?"

"To convince you that I do, look on this ring. She assured me it would be a passport to your confidence."

"I know the ring. It is an old family relic on which hangs some paltry legend. But I care nothing for traditions

and tokens. I am a man of action. You seem cast in the same mould. What is to be done?"

"In Agnes's opinion there is but one course, and she relies on your promptitude and courage to complete it. You must force your way into the elector's presence, and at the point of that good rapier insist on his marrying your sister."

"Did Agnes suggest this?"

"She urges it as absolutely necessary for her honour's sake."

"She was not wont to act and speak thus — but it is two years since we have met, and women change their characters."

"Or lose them, when left so long to themselves."

"Ernest should have cared after her. This is his fault."

"What could you expect from one like him? Energy and valour are the materials to watch over a sister's honour; and you, you alone are the man for this critical moment to secure hers."

"By Heaven, I'll do it! It will be a great action to force this mitred hypocrite to renounce his errors and his honours together — to give an example to the world — to ruin the profligate ——"

"Softly awhile, my gallant young friend," said Scotus, laying his hand on the shoulder of the hot-headed youth, and checking his intention of springing out of bed. "Calmness of manner and tone are essential with coolness of arrangement in a case like this; nor must you let a mad revenge destroy your sister's interest and your own. All may be conciliated with perfect ease. You would rather see Agnes Electress of Cologne — and yourself a colonel in your protestant brother-in-law's army, than drive him and her to beggary, and yourself to ——"

"I care not for myself — but your argument has weight. My sister's honour and happiness stand first. I know not this elector nor his designs — except on her. But if indeed he could hold his station as a reformed prince of the empire — and keep up his forces — perhaps he might increase them even — and certainly his service with promotion would be better for me than my lieutenancy in the King of Saxony's, or the promise of a troop in the army of Condé ——"

"All this is for after-thought. But for the present you must not, by look or gesture, betray the agitation of your mind,

or excite inquiry as to your name or business. Is your varlet prudent?"

"He may well be, for an incautious word as to me or my affairs is his death-warrant."

"Good! I will now leave you for awhile. Make your toilette, refresh yourself, keep quietly in your room, and wait my return. I will secure the best means for your seeing the elector without risk of interruption; reckon on me!"

"I do, for there is something about you that inspires confidence, and be assured I am not one that gives mine hastily."

"That I discovered at once — and I honour you for your caution," replied Scotus, closing the door; and putting in practice his rule of always praising men for the quality in which they were most deficient. As he reached the kitchen again on his way out he found the host in a very bad temper, but endeavouring to keep it down by another bumper from the bottle of Malvoisie which he held in his hand.

"May you live a thousand years, senor," said he, as Scotus appeared, "and verily after coming safe out of the room of that young madman, I think you have a fair chance of it! You see, senor, I make free with your flask, and you will excuse me, I am sure, when you know the cause of my vexation."

"You are heartily welcome, friend, the wine was your own; but what has so ruffled you?"

"Look there, senor, at those pitchers ranged in the corner."

"What are they? where do they come from?"

"Why, a present from the town council to this Prince of Liegnitz, which has been passed on here from 'The Holy Trinity,' with an ironical message to wish me joy of my new customers. And precious customers they are likely to turn out!"

"My good host, a man of your evident liberal turn of character, should not care for such a trifling matter as this. Those captains, even should they drink this provision of wine, will like yours all the better for it, for it is not likely to be of the best."

"No, that's some consolation. It is sure to be sour and poor. But those fellows will swallow any trash, particularly as they have not to pay for it, and they'll get through these

thirty measures of a gallon and half each before they'll call for a single stoup from my cellar."

"They'll most likely give them to the poor."

"Not they, my brave senor. They are themselves as poor as rats for all their swaggering. I've just learnt that they did not give a groschen to the town sergeant who saw their luggage safe up from the river to 'The Holy Trinity' last night, and that a crown and a half was the whole sum they distributed among the porters, and that this morning they have offered a broken-winded gelding and an old spavined mare as security for their last night's bill. Alas! senor, it had been an unlucky day on which they set foot in my house, were it not that the same sun saw the glory of your excellency honouring it with your presence."

"Well, well, remember you have a sum in hand, and I will, to a certain extent, hold you harmless for these gentlemen's demands. Methinks, after all, this wine present is a very shabby one, and I should not be surprised if the prince returned it contemptuously to the corporation, or broke up the pitiful pitchers which contain it."

"Well, senor, I hope he may; and even that would be better than was done by a certain Count Starberg, two years gone, who drank the wine and carried off the silver tankards with him on his way to the Flemish wars."

"Did he, indeed?"

"Ay, did he, senor, to the great disgrace of his rank; and since that day the council only sends what is not worth being stolen to those passing gallants."

"They are wise, methinks, and you will be so too, mine host, to keep your temper as they keep their tankards. Here is a piece of coin for your Malvoisie — never mind the change. It can go to the servants. I shall be back anon, and in the mean time do all due honour to the young cavalier above stairs."

The aforesaid young cavalier, having called the servants, roused his varlet, dressed and breakfasted, found himself marvellously uncomfortable in the confinement of his sombre and solitary chamber; and hearing just underneath loud talking, laughing, and other signals of company, he, after various efforts at restraint, resolved to go down into the public room. On descending, he found it occupied by two or three groups,

who, seated at different tables, had begun the serious occupations of the early dinner, usual at the hour of noon, even unto this day throughout Germany. Tobacco had not, happily for the community, then come into use in Europe, and its stupifying effects shed no drowsy halo round the broad disk of German conviviality. Men talked and looked, of course, with much more vivacity and gracefulness than they possibly can under the odious influence of this worst of weeds, and no one was then (as he who smokes not is now) obliged to stand aloof from the loathsome impurity of his neighbour's breath. Christopher de Mansfelt came up, therefore, fearlessly close to four or five military-looking men, who were jocosely talking together, and who seemed evidently waiting till their mid-day meal was ready. They looked for a moment or two at the handsome and gaily-dressed figure of the young stranger, and exchanging salutations with him proceeded in their discourse, as he moved away towards a window which looked into the street.

"This is always the way with you, Zirchen," said one of the officers; "you run down the reputation of women, and disparage their beauty without mercy. If that languishing-looking girl had been more favourably impressed with the beauty of your long red beard yesterday, you had given her a kinder word this morning."

"Not I, by Saint Mark! It was clear to me and to every one but you, that she only waited a word on my part to give me every return I was likely to ask for; but you were jealous, comrade, of her evident preference," replied the other, turning his hand through his meteor-beard which we have before called into notice.

"Preference, Zirchen! that is the worst libel you have yet uttered on the damsel's good taste. She is indeed a lost creature if she could choose to enlist under such a fiery banner as you hang out. But I did not stand in your way, though I might perhaps. I will leave it to Koller if I did not from the first fix on the lass in the blue bodice and Mechlin point, as the loveliest of the group."

"What, she whom the elector threw such amorous looks at?"

"The same. And I meant plainly to tell her my mind, until I saw his highness's reverence steal his hand round her waist, while they entered the tent together, and press her to

him as devoutly as though she had been a penitent in a confessional. She *is* a perfect piece of beauty ! ”

“ Did you hear her name amongst the rest ? ” asked Koller, the person appealed to.

“ Yes,” observed Zirchen, “ one of the women called her Agnes, and Count Scotus told Ritter Heinrich she was a Mansfelt.”

“ Then he lied, sir, whoever he be ! and whoever repeats his calumny is a villain ! ” exclaimed the young cavalier, striding forward, and fiercely clapping his hand to his rapier’s hilt. The captains looked somewhat confounded at this interruption to their conversation, while the dinner groups suspended their operations and gazed and listened.

“ Yes, a liar and a villain, and I will prove it at my sword’s point, with whichever or how many of this company as may make the quarrel their own,” resumed the youth, more angry at the silence which met his first sally.

“ These are hot words and hard ones, young sir,” said Zirchen, seizing with a double twist the favourite plaything that floated from his chin upon his breast ; “ and, depend on it, their digestion will not be easy, by and by, when you are forced to eat them.”

“ They and my sword-blade shall choke you first, and every one of your slanderous fellows who dares to speak lightly of a virtuous lady and a noble house. Give me your name, sir, and his whom you quoted erewhile.”

“ My name is Zirchen, and my friend whom you have so politely christened liar, is called Von Sweinishen. As you will have to account with two of us at least, you will let me know to whom we are indebted for the opportunity of a little after-dinner exercise.”

“ You and your friend shall find me ready now — on the spot — but I do not choose to give my name to the loose keeping of such scandal-mongers.”

“ And do you think that noble gentlemen will condescend to measure blades with an unknown bully, in a quarrel to which he dares not avow his title ? ”

“ Bully ! Unknown ! By heavens, methinks you give me good cause of quarrel on mine own account ! and I accept the gage. Draw, then, on the spot, and follow me out into the courtyard. We must not interrupt those gentlemen’s din-

ner. And I claim the courtesy of seeing that I meet fair play at the hands of any one here present."

At these words the rapier of which the reader has heard so often was pulled clean out of its scabbard, and the various persons present stood up, with as various objects and feelings; Don José and the servants rushed in from the kitchen; and the pugnacious champion of his sister's honour, or rather, the angry avenger of what he believed to be its lost lustre, was walking out of the public room to the courtyard, followed by the reitre captains, who could not refuse his summons, when he was met by Scotus, entering the house hurriedly from the street.

The prompt eye of the Italian read much of what had passed, in the angry bearing of De Mansfelt and those who followed him. He saw clearly that his impatient temper had hurried him into a quarrel; and his first anxiety was to get him clear of its consequences, for the present at least.

"Well met, my friend, you are just the man I wanted, to witness the chastisement of my sister's slanderer," said Christopher.

"His sister!" exclaimed one of the captains.

"Ay, any one might have seen the likeness who was not half drunk yesterday," replied another.

"What is all this about? I must beg leave to ask the particulars before the affair proceeds further," said Scotus.

"When it is finished, you shall have every explanation, count," answered Zirchen; "it is enough that this nameless young braggart has chosen to take umbrage at a light joke relative to one of the ladies of the party yesterday, and that his insulting language to me and others demands the atonement of his blood."

"Gentlemen, I implore ye to pause for one moment. There is evidently a mistake all through; no offence could be meant to an unknown person by a mere reference to another. You must admit that, Count Christopher? You will allow, Captain Zirchen, that the hurt feelings of a relative is a fair excuse for a hasty word or two."

"I admit nothing; I allow nothing;" said the two angry men, respectively.

"One thing, at least, I must insist on," replied Scotus, pressed for time, and seeing the intractable materials he had

to deal with — “that your combat is put off for a couple of hours. Ye are both right, I am sure, in your opinions. The most honourable men may see the same question in different points of view.”

“Ah, here comes Ritter Heinrich, he will now take up his own quarrel,” exclaimed Koller.

“Not till mine is avenged,” said Zirchen, sullenly; and two or three of the captains gathered round their newly-arrived comrade to explain the matter of the dispute. Scotus, from his short conversation with Von Sweinishen the previous day, was convinced that he was the most manageable of the party; and our readers have already had an instance of his prudent temper in the matter of the bargain with the hostel-keeper. The Italian accordingly advanced towards him, and begged the favour of a moment’s conversation apart, which was readily conceded by Ritter Heinrich, who had keenly observed the influence of the count at Bruhl. De Mansfelt consented to wait awhile, but sternly refused to sheathe his sword; and he strode up and down the courtyard, while his adversaries, in a group in one corner of it, talked over the conditions of the expected duels.

“Thank God, I have alighted on one wise man, at last,” was the beginning of Scotus’s appeal to the Ritter Heinrich; “and I reckon on your aiding me to put a stop to this foolish brawl. But in the first place let me throw this chain round the neck which should never have been despoiled of its ornament had I been closer at hand when you made your bargain within here. Not a word of question, I insist on it; I must be peremptory, and you must be generous enough to pardon me. The chain is yours again, and you have a credit with the hostel-keeper for two hundred crowns, which shall be doubled if you need it. And now to the affair in question. This young man, Count Mansfelt, brother of the elector’s chosen mistress, and himself his prime favourite, has got into some mad dispute with your comrades here. Ghebbard Truchses would rather lose a regiment than that a hair of his head should be touched. If, then, the elector’s friendship is worth securing, you will hush this business up. Calm down that fiery-bearded and furious-tempered Zirchen, while I take De Mansfelt off. Urgent business requires his absence for an hour or two — perhaps for the whole evening. But if nothing

but fighting can be done, I promise you you shall have him to-night or to-morrow at latest, to do with him what you like."

A few words from Von Sweinishen sufficed to satisfy Zirchen and the rest with the proposed arrangement; and on Scotus explaining to De Mansfelt that he had smoothed the way for his immediately seeing the elector, and that the captains would wait for the settlement of the quarrel till his more important business was completed, he consented to put up his weapon and withdraw from the scene. The Italian, therefore, took him under his arm and walked him from the ground, the obsequious salutations of the one forming a strong contrast to the haughty looks thrown out by the other.

The majority of the captains paid no great attention to the difference of manner. But Ritter Heinrich, fixing his sharp grey eyes on Scotus, muttered to himself, —

"This overwhelming civility and wondrous generosity must have some object! That cunning Italian is not a man to throw away his money or his smiles for nothing. We shall see! If he thinks he has bought a dupe for a few hundred crowns, he may find himself mistaken."

The arrival of the prince and the rest of the officers was followed immediately by the appearance of dinner.

And now the scene of our story shifts once more to the place in which it first opened.

CHAPTER XVI.

WITHIN a few minutes after the scene related in the last chapter old Karl Kreutzer stepped as briskly as he could from his lodge, and threw open the large gates which were under his guardianship, for his accustomed ear had caught the sounds of carriage-wheels, and instantly knew them to be those of the elector's, whose almost daily visits had already produced a considerable addition to the porter's perquisites. It was indeed Ghebbard Truchses who now arrived, in all the flush of feeling already described, with heart and mind in unison for the avowal of the great decision he had irrevocably formed, and trusting to the force of his passion for fitting words in which to offer to its object a share in all the dignities which he him-

self possessed, and was resolved, in despite of all dangers, to hold, with the entire possession of the heart, without which the hand is but a barren gift. He was met in the courtyard by Baron Conrad ; an unusual circumstance, for he generally had discretion enough to keep out of the way, to avoid being an interruption to the elector's visit. Truchses thought there was a wild expression on the face of his old friend. But he heeded it not. Nor was he sorry to meet him thus on the path of his triumphant project. With all his confidence there was mixed a strange and nervous fluttering that made him glad of even a check in his career. He was not just then susceptible to presentiments of ill. All his forethoughts had been hitherto of success and joy. But at a moment so critical as this he felt as though afraid to rush at once into the possession of his happiness ; and he hung back, with a mingled sentiment made up of fear and shame.

" Why, Kriechlingen, my old friend, what ails you ? Has some fresh bad news arrived since our conference erewhile, to damp the high spirits in which we parted ? " said Truchses, in a gay and rallying tone as he stepped from the carriage.

" Verily, your highness, I am somewhat changed since then ; and methinks you may divine the cause."

" By my honour, no. Explain, then, my good friend, but briefly. I would not be long delayed, for I am impatient to offer my respects to the ladies above, and details of business, be it what it may, can be entered on afterwards."

" I can, on occasion, as your highness knows, be a man of few words, and prompt action. Honour me, then, with a private moment in this saloon, before seeking to go further."

The elector's heart sunk ; but he neither spoke nor looked the sudden pang of apprehension, which arose from the instinctive promptitude of love to fix on its own peculiar object every cause of alarm. He silently preceded Kriechlingen into the room towards which the latter pointed.

" Speak now and quickly, Baron Kriechlingen," said Truchses in a firm voice.

" I will, sir," replied the baron, with a tone of decision, and yet preserving his respectful bearing. " I wave all profession of my deep and dutiful attachment to your highness, my sovereign, and I must presume still to say my friend."

" Still ! "

"Yes, after all I cannot doubt your highness's regard for me personally, although a lapse of reflection may have led you to forget it — and though hurried away by passion — not that I am a man to preach an overstrict morality — nor one that may not ——"

"How is this? I cannot brook this torturing suspense? Tell me of Agnes — Is she well, safe? — all this relates to her — I feel it as surely as though you spoke the truth with lightning speed. What means that smile? what would it imply? Speak out, Baron Kriechlingen — I command you to end this mummery and explain!"

"Then since it comes to this, your highness, and since you add insult to outrage," said the old soldier, stung to the quick, "I tell you plainly, though my head should answer for it, you have acted unlike a friend, unworthy a sovereign, prince, and in no ways to do honour to your station, in violating the sacredness of my house, and carrying off my relative and guest — I will not be stopped even by your highness — no, you force me to speak out, and by Heaven you shall hear me!" continued Kriechlingen, placing his back against the door, as Truchses strove to interrupt him; and, finding that impossible, then moved with the intention of rushing from the chamber, "No, you shall not escape my reproaches. I tell your highness again, with great respect, it was infamous! I call on you to give back the Countess de Mansfelt to my protection. Little did I expect this at your highness's hands — little did I believe that Ghebbard Truchses would sully the glorious place he was about to assume by an act like this. Shame, shame, your highness! Have not your triumphs been enough? Is not your character sufficiently established? Was another victim required — one who might have done honour to your throne!"

"By heavens thou art mad — stark mad!" cried Truchses, silencing the vociferations of the baron, less by the loudness of his voice than by the terrible intensity of his look — "Stark mad, or this is all meant to drive me so — or some bold treason is at work, and has taken this monstrous form. At thy peril let me pass! or by my mitre and sceptre both I'll tear thy rebel carcass in atoms! Stand aside, I say again!"

But Kriechlingen kept his place firmly, and replied —

"No, not even this well-feigned rage shall make me quit

my post. Your highness is unarmed—there, take my sword and kill me if you doubt my allegiance; but I will not leave this spot alive till you swear to resign back Agnes to my protection.”

These words were accompanied by the action they expressed. The brave old baron drew his sword from its sheath and flung it on the floor. Truchses, looking on it, and then on its owner, exclaimed,

“I am stupified, astounded by all this. What does it all mean? How durst you treat your sovereign thus, audacious old man? Who has put this base notion in your brain?”

“Who? your highness shall see, and sink with shame in seeing who. The time is come for confronting you with your accuser. This persistence in the foul wrong you have done to two noble houses, and to a maiden of matchless beauty and virtue, puts an end to all delicacy. Come forward now, most injured youth!”

On these words the door of a small cabinet was forced open, and Christopher de Mansfelt, pale and trembling with passion, stalked into the room. At sight of this stranger, so formidable in his looks and gestures, Truchses stooped for the weapon he had at first rejected; and retreating against the wall, he took an attitude of defence, and said, in his most lofty tone of defiance,

“Who next? Let them all loose, for this boy-bravo was never sent to vanquish me alone. Ah, Conrad Von Kriechlingen! I was warned to trust to no man—but I never looked for this treachery at your hands. You were the very last from whom I expected treason. But never mind—out with your fellow-conspirators—I am ready for them all!”

The bitter tone of this reproach went direct to the old baron’s heart. He saw clearly there was no hypocrisy in it, but that the elector had turned his accusal upon him in the belief of his being leagued in some murderous design. The shock of being so suspected brought him at once to reason; and the feeling of the wrong done to his own honour opened his eyes to the conviction of his sovereign’s innocence. He flung himself on one knee at Truchses’ feet, and exclaimed with much emotion,

“Yes, strike! It is time for me to die, since hurried into a belief of my sovereign’s guilt, my own honour is in its turn

arraigned. I am not fit to live—I ask no pardon, let my punishment be ample and immediate. Why do you hesitate? you have called me traitor—revenge yourself, then—and let this brother of Agnes de Mansfelt explain our mutual mistake.”

“Her brother!” said Truchses.

“Yes, her injured and now desperate brother,” cried Christopher, advancing still closer, “for I see the sway you hold over this weak old man. On myself I must now depend for justice. I call on you, then, to give back my sister—instantly, without a word—and then I claim at your hands prompt reparation for her outraged honour. As your wife the blot upon her reputation may be forgotten or unknown, but nothing short of this will satisfy me or her. In both our names, in that of our long train of honourable ancestors, I call on you—and we must have justice!”

“Rise, Kriechlingen, rise! There is some strange mystery in all this,” exclaimed the elector; when at the instant the door of the chamber was thrown open, and Scotus entered in great apparent astonishment and well-acted agitation. At this new intrusion Truchses felt a thrill that was not entirely caused by courage bent on a desperate defence. Something less intrepid was certainly mixed with it. During his whole intercourse with Scotus a feeling of fate had blended with every notion connected with the Italian. He ever wished to consider it a presage of good. But in spite of his daring enthusiasm, a chill at times ran through the current of his confidence. And now the sudden burst which brought this individual before him, in the midst of a circumstance so dubious, was well adapted to try to the utmost the nerves of our agitated hero. His natural valour did not forsake him; for the start of surprise and doubt once over, he grasped the sword more closely, and his feet seemed to fix themselves with increased firmness to the floor.

“I make no excuse for this intrusion,” said Scotus. “I heard high words—the household is alarmed—and I see enough to warrant all our apprehensions. Will your highness deign to explain this to me?”

“I am myself bewildered—it is I who must require explanation,” answered Truchses, greatly set at ease by the obsequious anxiety evinced in the Italian’s words and looks.

“Baron, what does this mean?” said the latter.

"Ask me nought, for I am overwhelmed with confusion and despair," was the reply.

"Then to you, sir, I address myself—a stranger you would be here, did not your likeness to Countess Agnes prove you a Mansfelt, and pronounce you her brother."

The cool impudence with which Scotus thus feigned ignorance of his person for a moment confounded the haughty youth; and the Italian, whose chief magic lay in taking prompt advantage of circumstances, immediately approached him, and, with gestures of remonstrance (while Kriechlingen was offering some new expression of remorse to the bewildered elector), he whispered him, —

"Is this the way you have kept your promise to leave all to the baron—or at least to keep cool and be calm? You have nearly ruined everything by your rashness! Not a word of reply—follow me immediately from this place—the household will seize you else, and then indeed all is lost—Agnes commands you to obey implicitly my advice—not a word, not a word—leave everything now to me, and all will yet be right."

Then, turning to Truchses, he said,

"This young cavalier is conscious of his imprudence, and will, with your highness's leave, now join me in seeking for his sister—no time is to be lost."

"What is the truth of this? Where *is* his sister? Again I ask, again I command a reply."

"I thought the baron had told your highness of the disappearance of Countess Agnes. This letter found on her dressing-table may explain the rest."

Truchses recognised Agnes's handwriting, and snatched the letter from Scotus; and the latter, leaving him absorbed in its perusal, hurried Christopher from the room, followed by the wondering eyes of Baron Kriechlingen, who when he had fairly disappeared exclaimed,

"Well, that *is* the wonder-master! none may resist his power. Verily, I believe he could lay spirits or cast out devils! What does your highness think of this? Can such power as that be a natural or a legal power? can there be any doubt?"

"Peace, peace, I say!" exclaimed Truchses, fiercely stamping, and at the same time dashing on the floor the huge rapier

which he had kept in his grasp, until disarmed by the intenseness of his feelings. Had his enemies sought him then he had been an easy prey. The baron silently took up his weapon, and, replacing it in the scabbard, began some muttering apology, but was interrupted by a fiercely uttered,

"Leave me! and, at the peril of your head, let no one dare to interrupt me!"

Von Kriechlingen hastened from the room, and, repulsing the anxious inquiries of his daughters who had hurried down stairs, and motioning off the domestics who, attracted by the loud words within, thronged towards the bustling scene, he once more drew his rapier forth, and, taking post in front of the door, he paced up and down, with desperate looks and vigorous tramp, more like some grim sentry before a prison cell than a devoted friend guarding the sacred person of his sovereign.

And we may now for awhile contemplate in fancy him in whose service this vigilant watch was kept—the haughty victor checked in his full career—the proud enthusiast stricken in his boldest flight—the noble-minded, the tender-hearted! Every feeling of his nature worked upon, his power controlled, his pride offended, his warmth, his tenderness, his eloquence, all set at nought. For the first time in his life he had encountered a woman of sentiment and honour, who made no secret of her love, yet fled from his. Others, 'tis true, had lured him on and laughed him off by turns, in the mean coquetry which plays with passion and makes love a sport. But arts like these had never deceived him—and never do deceive a man of mind. Such a one can even in passion's height see through the veil in which callousness is clothed, and can separate the assumption of individual virtue from what is but the pride of sex, which, like the pride of station, is often stronger than even self-love; for, as a king will pardon an offence against his person rather than a slight thrown upon his rank, so many a mistress refuses for the honour of her sex what she is inclined to grant for her own happiness. Ghebhard Truchses had met and studied many varieties of woman's feeling, and had a quick appreciation of all, and in the present instance he was keenly alive to the deep reality of the virtue of whose resolve he was now the victim.

But did he not, nevertheless, writhe in the smart of wounded

vanity and slighted power? and swear to subdue and be revenged on the stubborn beauty who would read this lesson to his presumption? No, not one shadow of ungenerous thought passed through his mind. But while he perused over and over again the touching eloquence of her letter, warm tears of genuine joy dimmed every word.

Had Agnes thrown herself unreservedly into his arms he had not felt happier than in this moment of her avowed withdrawal from his presence for ever. In the simple entreaty that he would forget her, he read the fiat for his eternal constancy — in the expressed renouncement of all claims upon his love, he acknowledged the patent of her sovereignty. In every one of those exquisite phrases, where delicacy seemed struggling through despair, he could, he would see nothing short of a compact of mutual affection, a covenant of long lasting bliss. The splendid infatuation in which he read that letter was one of the thousand tributes to love's mastery paid on that day — as there are and have been, on all days since the human heart was framed to throb with feelings fit for heaven.

But the delight of these first moments soon vanished from the mind of Truchses. The sensation of Agnes's absence succeeded to them; at first vague and undefined, then bleak and chill, next piercing and almost maddening. The exclamation which accompanied the sudden thought that she was indeed gone, that she might be lost to him, was more like the utterance of intense bodily pain than the sound of mental suffering. He started forward, and rushed from the saloon out into the corridor, where Von Kriechlingen kept his guard in stern obedience. At sight of this unexpected sentinel the elector recovered in some degree his composure, and wholly his presence of mind. It was not the dignity of the sovereign, but the pride of the man, which was aroused; and paramount to all feelings was the dread of attracting observation towards Agnes, from anything peculiar in his own bearing when entering on the subject of her disappearance.

Yet he immediately made inquiries the most anxious and minute from the baron and his daughters, from the tire-women of Agnes and Duchess Anne, and from the several domestics. Nothing could be learned more than that the two friends had left the garden by the private door, two hours previously, without any suspicion having been excited of their intending

more than a not unusual promenade, until the hurried appearance of the young stranger who announced himself to the baron as Agnes's brother, a few minutes before the elector's arrival, with a positive assurance that his sister was in the secret possession of that dangerous personage, and that his designs on her were of the most unequivocal baseness. Old Conrad, in congenial hot-headedness, taking fire at the supposed indignity done to his own honour, as well as shocked at the peril to which that of his young kinswoman was exposed, took on himself the instant accusation of Truchses, with what result has been seen. Christopher, on his part, consenting to keep to his hiding-place until called forth at the proper time, to enforce the demand of that reparation which Von Kriechlingen as well as himself had it so much at heart to obtain. But even then, had it not been for Agnes's letter, Truchses and the rest might not have had reason to suspect any lengthened absence on the part of the two ladies, nor did he feel any doubt of his finding means to recover and bring them back, until it was ascertained that Ernest too was missing. Then all Agnes's revelation touching that questionable brother rushed upon his mind; and successive pangs of anguish followed quick, in the conviction that jealousy most monstrous, or an influence which he shuddered at, had urged on and enabled De Mansfelt to pay him back with tenfold force the torture which he so triumphed in inflicting on this now hateful rival the preceding night.

It was then that deadly notions rushed through the elector's brain of the absolute necessity, for his own repose, of ridding himself of this fraternal obstacle to his happiness. But she! where was she? How was he to commence his search? In what way overcome the terrible resolution she had taken to give him up, how convince her that his very being hung upon her breath? What miracle of heaven was to interfere and shorten the misery that seemed doomed to enfold him? Where, where was he to seek her?

In the distraction of his feelings he for almost the first time in his life felt that he had no power of self-relief. The idea of his being dependent on others was in itself great suffering. To wrestle with fate and place his foot upon the neck of the vanquished world, seemed ever to have been a want of his soul. Danger and difficulty he had often courted

in the very wantonness of his courage—as a mere excitement. But that was on occasions of his own personal risk, when had he failed he had failed alone, and when the interest of another, the most precious consideration to a man of sentiment, was uninvolved. In the present case, however, he felt far differently. To have regained his beloved one he would have confronted a thousand deaths; but the dread of losing her by some imprudent effort for her recovery seemed to paralyse his plans as fast as they were conceived.

In this emergency his thoughts scattered wide and near in search of help. He thought of Nuenar, but shrunk back at the recollection of his cold and cynical turn regarding all affairs of the heart. Various officers of his household, some of his ministers, young Leckenstein, Von Heyen, even the prince of Liegnitz, rose upon his anxious mind—but one man above all others seemed to fill each successive place, as those we have enumerated were from sundry reasons discarded. That one was Scotus. He alone possessed the power of fixing the elector's thoughts on this occasion; for Truchses felt that to him alone were those thoughts no secret. The influence which the Italian had been for so many weeks incessantly twining round his generous dupe was now indeed supreme. For Truchses felt satisfied that without him he could accomplish nothing—with him everything. It was on him, then, that he fixed as his counsellor and confidant in this hour of utmost need. He recollected his having gone with this new and more formidable, but less repulsive, brother of Agnes in her search. But he had an instinctive feeling that the Italian would not abandon him in such a crisis. And having exchanged many a cordial hand-pressure with his stanch friend the baron and his daughters, and encouraged him and his servants to persevere in the search they now prepared for, he resolved to return to the palace, and await with such substitute for patience as he might best succeed in creating, the appearance of him who was now more than ever the incarnate personification of his fate.

CHAPTER XVII.

WE will not attempt to describe minutely the tumult of feeling which agitated our hero for some hours after his return to the palace. The desperate resolves for the recovery of his lost mistress, the cruel doubts lest a covert delicacy had prevented her stating the personal repugnance which might after all have urged her escape from him, misgivings as to his age, his power of gaining such a heart as hers, the dread of some secret rivalry, horror at the notion of Ernest's influence — all this must be imagined, and may be by those who have endured the chequered feelings of adventurous love. But for all this, and a thousand nameless other perplexities of thought, which float as thickly in the enamoured mind as motes in the sunbeam, there was still a remedy to which Truchses, with a lover's instinct, constantly turned. Agnes's letter, breathing the very life of truth, was ever before him, on his table as he sat, or in his hand as he perturbedly paced his chamber, and in its contents he found consolation and hope, as surely as the believer, assailed by religious doubts, finds safety in the inspired oracles of his faith.

The elector had given strict orders that no one on any pretext was to be allowed to interrupt his privacy, and that none but Walram should approach his person that day except Count Scotus, for whose immediate introduction as soon as he might return to the palace the valet was prepared. And long and heavy seemed the hours to Ghebhard's burdened mind! His dinner was served, but though his pride made him assume the air of heroism even to his valet, and though he consequently went through the forms of the table rather than appear overpowered by his feelings, the viands left it nearly untouched, and he soon retired again into the private closet, where within a few short weeks he had passed hours of solitude more exciting and more sacred than the whole experience of his former life had afforded. Walram, who knew his master's ways and often anticipated his wishes, took care to place the wine-flasks now within his sight and reach. And with those companions, whose sympathy was ever ready and often appealed to, did Truchses plunge through the tide of

time, tossed to and fro like a reeling ship in a heavy sea. Evening had now set in. The tortures of suspense became almost intolerable. He was over and over on the point of summoning his household officers, and ordering out his servants—his troops—his subjects *en masse*—for the discovery of the lost treasure. But that innate feeling of delicacy towards her, which in the first instance made him leave those measures to the care of her brothers and her host, bore him up through all, and his greatest impatience now was for the tardy-coming night, when he might himself unobservedly rush forth in search, where or how he knew not, yet feeling as if his labours could not fail of success. He swallowed bumper after bumper—to calm, to stimulate, to temper, to excite—he found new excuses for every excess. Yet he felt no immediate change as the consequence of his large potations. It seemed to him as though he might drain an ocean of wine and yet be sober. And often during these wild hours of lone intemperance he paused and asked himself if he were indeed not drunk? and he strove to call up in calm array his inmost feelings and pass them in review. To these successive questionings he always answered no. But each effort for self-examination was baffled, by the very breath of the rising thoughts which dimmed their own reflection in his mind's mirror. All was confusion. And the anarchy had in a little more been complete had not Walram ushered in without ceremony, the individual who alone had power to arrest the torrent by which Truchses was carried away.

"At last, at last!" exclaimed the elector, starting from his seat, "you are come—you have then found her? She is safe?"

"Alas, no," replied Scotus, eyeing keenly the ingenuous countenance now in full play before him. "Safe I trust she may be, but we have not found her—yet do not despair. A great mind rises against difficulties——"

"To be crushed, perhaps, the more surely by their fall! Not found! Where have you sought? What has been done? And her brother—he I mean who burst on me to-day, in her likeness, but as the angry phantom of a dream—where is he?"

"Worn out with fatigue and anxiety, he now reposes, after having with me done all that man might do in such a case.

Baron Conrad and his household, the city train-bands, the town-officers are all on foot. The alert has been given at the barriers, scouts sent on every road——”

“ And all ineffectual ! Then must I myself to the pursuit. I alone may snatch her from that fraternal tyrant who dares thus to thwart my love — and let him beware our meeting ! ”

“ Is this, then, the Elector of Cologne, the high dignitary, the prince of the empire, the champion of reform ! What ! *You* start out on an ignoble chase after a most unworthy as well as a most unnatural rival, to do what ? To put a mean brother to death, and thus throw an eternal barrier between yourself and *her* ! Is Agnes a woman to give her love to her brother’s murderer ? Nay, nay, such was the thought that spoke in that fierce look.”

“ It was, it was, I own it. But what needs the confession, you know my thoughts. Tell me, then, how to direct them to the great purpose of my soul—what must I do to recover my soul’s idol ? I *must* recover her or perish.”

“ You shall ! What power may thwart your will and mine ? What depth is dark enough, what world is wide enough, to hide the object that *we* seek ? Where is the confidence of your noble nature ? do you abandon *that* ? ”

“ You are my hope, my most extreme reliance. Guide, counsel me—command me if you will—I swear obedience to your mastery.”

“ Drink then, let’s drink to our reciprocal allegiance—for I vow my utmost service to your will, and that will shall be accomplished.”

“ Walram ! more wine—quick, and with liberal hand. Ay, count, let us pledge ourselves in wine. You promise her to me ? ”

“ She is already yours. Separate but not dissevered, the invisible chain of sympathy binds ye together, in spite of time or space. Baulked and baffled for awhile, your triumph is not less secure. The stars that shone upon your respective births are now in conjunction brightening your united paths. Apart, ye travel to the same goal. Your hearts have the same object, your minds are musical with the same tune. Every impulse of your being is hers. Every spring of her existence is identical with yours. You love and are beloved. No power can sunder the common purpose of your souls. To live for, with, and in each other is

the essence of your destiny. What mortal power may violate the law of eternal fate! Ay, you are right, drink freely, and be wise! Wine is the generous dew for love's rich harvest, which, blooming and fragrant, sends forth flower and fruit—drink, then, drink!”

“My lips are parched—and my mind burns with an insatiable thirst. The wine mounts to my brain, but the melody and perfume of your words mix with its luscious fumes. I must not drink more—I would only listen to you. Speak to me then, of Agnes, that I may grow ebriate with hearing her praise. She loves me then? and she shall be mine, again—now—and for ever? Tell me that delicious tale again. Speak to me of the stars, the heavenly arbiters of fate. Do they indeed burn brightly on our love? She loves me, she is mine!—But ah! where, where is she? By the deep mystery of your knowledge—by the deeper majesty of my love, I conjure thee to tell me where is Agnes?”

“Does she not live in your heart's core? Is she not twined, tendril-like, through every fibre of your being? What would you more?”

“I would have her here corporeally before my burning eyes, that they might grow cool again drinking in large draughts of beauty—I would have her at my side—pressed close to mine, that my heart might feel the bounding throb of hers. I would have her in my ardent clasp, that my lips might——.” Here the pure sentiment of passion interposed, and checked the exuberance of its own rapture.

“Here—I would have her here, that I might lay my prostrate body at her feet, offer my rank, my state, my soul for her acceptance—make myself hers, make her mine, both indivisible—set fate at defiance, dare the angry world, and live or die, no matter which, with her!”

Every phrase almost was followed by another draught, and each new draught excited some fresh rhapsody. The wily Italian played his noble-minded and full-hearted puppet well. He did not mean to let him sink into unconsciousness. He measured the limits to which his mind might safely be allowed to wander; and he found it easy by a word or look to lure it back again. Scotus talked wild and mysterious words, mingling the jargon and eloquence of science with fantastic analogies, all made to bear on the main object of Ghebhard's extravagant

passion ; and much that may not see the light was added, to inflame its ardour without risking to shock its delicacy. The voluptuous refinement of our hero's mind was thus urged to its utmost bent. Desire and delicacy mingled together in a maze, as wondrous as the union between mental and bodily feeling, and fixed on the same object as intensely as the separate glances from two eyes centring in a common point.

"Then your resolve is firm," said Scotus, having raised the elector to the utmost verge of excitement—"you will risk all for the possession of her beauty?"

"I will do more, I say again—I will *sacrifice all*. She is mortal perfection to look upon!—sense has no delight beyond that of her possession. Bring her to my arms, and I scatter to the winds all thought of power, all notion of ambition—but that of revelling in the rapture of her embrace. Oh, could I see her now, in the rich luxury of her charms!" At these words Truchses, who paced the room in irregular movements, reeled to a chair, and placing both hands upon his brow, showed evidently he had reached the crisis between sobriety and intoxication. Recovering for a moment he fixed his look on his companion, and said,

"I am no longer master of myself—my brain turns round. Watch me, my friend, that I commit no excess of word or thought against the divine object of my love. I would not for the world of joys combined in her possession dream even a notion unworthy of her purity. Guard me then against my overheated fancy—but still talk of her—picture her to me as she is, all beauty, grace, and symmetry—let her person rise again and again on my mind in the same voluptuous mist. Let her swim before me, let her breathe and live in imagined reality. Oh, powers of love and beauty, how ye wrap my mind!"

"Now, mark well my words," said the Italian, rising slowly and laying his hand, with light yet thrilling pressure, on that of Truchses; "words solemn as the holy spirits which you invoke, fulgent with truth and the power of my sacred art. You ask me to hold up this miracle of beauty to your fancied gaze; I will do more! What will you say, what do, if in yon mirror's broad reflection I raise the living image of your love, instinct with motion, sentiment and passion—glowing in all her charms, looking enchantments—as true as if her breathing form stood here before you?"

No sudden start, no phrensied phrase of drunken wonderment, answered this speech. Truchses clasped his hands together before him on the table, and, looking full in the Italian's face, with eyes that seemed at once to speak a complete return of reason, he said, in calm deep accents,

"Count Scotus, have you the power to do this?"

Scotus was for an instant overwhelmed with the fear that he had been too quick — that he had recalled his victim to himself, by the over-sudden proposition of a feat almost too magical for superstition's self to believe in. He paused, and watching with piercing look the face and form before him, he saw the colour go and come, and the lips quiver, and the broad breast heave, while the visible throbbing of the enthusiast's heart made his laced vestments shake like an aspen in the wind. The elector passed his hands again across his eyes and brow. Scotus saw that all was safe. Then and then only he spoke again.

"I *have* the power. But — but its practice must be purchased. The very depths of science were fathomed, the very heights of knowledge scaled, before that mightiest triumph of art became mine own. Jerome Scotus needs scarcely now reveal to Ghebhard Truchses that he lives by his skill, put forth for others' happiness. The powerful sovereign must be generous if the poor magician is dexterous. The reward must be proportioned to the service. What price will your highness pay, to see the full-length image of Agnes de Mansfelt, moving, breathing, living, in that glass?"

"Price!" exclaimed Truchses languidly, throwing himself back in his chair, while a smile wild and faint passed across his half-open lips. "Who dares to fix a price upon such beauty, or may hope to purchase such skill? Show her to me as you say — and thus prove your power to work this miracle, and all I possess is yours — for then you can surely give her to me — *she, herself* — will you do that?"

"Even that may be within my power; but I must have time. Are you then content to wait ——"

"Wait!" exclaimed Truchses, starting up again, "not for all the kingdoms of the world one single instant. Oh, I am frantic at the thought you have raised! Take me off this cruel rack. You promised to show me the image of my love — you hesitate — ah, the reward! True — it is but just

that such intense delight should be amply paid for. Here then," continued the elector, tottering towards a chest broadly clasped with iron, on which the longing looks of the Italian had many a time been fixed, and which was now opened wide before his avaricious gaze, "here, from the heart of my private treasures, take what thou wilt, most admirable magician. Is this not gold? are not these jewels? Help thyself freely — beggar me if thou wilt — to make me richer than the god of wealth, in the mere sight of her blessed image."

"And for herself — for her own proper person, laid on your bosom, clasped in your circling arms?"

"Talk not of that, unless thy power can do it at once. It is too much for my reeling brain. — The glass, the glass! I gaze on it but see her not. Show her to me quickly, if thou wouldst not set me mad — I can endure no longer."

"One solemn promise now is all I exact from your honour," said Scotus, with both hands on the elector's breast — "strict secrecy, as to this proof of my art and its reward."

"I swear it," said Truchses, sinking once more upon a seat.

"Now then, in the name of the grand mysteries of sacred science, by virtue of the eternal secrets of the unknown world, I command you, Ghebhard Truchses, to close your eyes, to let no rash, blasting weakness urge you to raise a lid until the word is given, on pain of instant death to yourself and her the object of this great experiment. May all the powers whose combined influence guides the mystic action of the spheres watch over and direct my poor efforts to complete success! Are your lids closed?"

"Close as my hands may press them down — yet golden visions dance before my sight."

"Tis the train of glorious spirits ushering in the bright image which my skill is about to raise. Be firm and steady — Look not until I pronounce her name — then let your full gaze fall upon the mirror — she will be there! But at your peril turn not to look at me!"

The elector spoke not. And then arose a strain of soft and magic-sounding harmony, as if a band of full-toned instruments breathed in the subdued mellowness of far, far distance. Scotus was a perfect musician, and his skill had anticipated the modern invention of the *harmonica*, now so common. An

exquisite odour filled the chamber. The step of the Italian trod lightly and rapidly across the floor, and then returned. Some murmured incantation rolled indistinctly from his lips.

"Now, Agnes, come!" said he, in accents of sweet blandishment, as though he strove to lure a spirit from its haunts in heaven.

At the word, Truchses, rapt in enchantment, opened his eyes wide, yet as if afraid of what he longed to look on, and fixed his trembling gaze upon the mirror. A light vapour gradually moved from before its face, and as it floated upwards a female form was visible, slow moving forwards. The lamp threw down its full light upon the reflected figure. It was indeed the form and face of Agnes, in the divine expression of graceful attitude and splendid beauty.

"Eternal Heavens! 'tis she, 'tis she!" cried Truchses, bounding from his seat. At the instant the figure threw its hands upwards, clasped them together, turned its head, and disappeared.

"Stay, stay!" exclaimed the elector, rushing forward with a shriek of delirious fervour; and, just as he reached the mirror and was on the point of dashing himself against its surface, a vigorous clasp enfolded him, and he fell senseless in the Italian's arms.

"Hist! Walram, hist!" exclaimed the latter, in anxious yet suppressed impatience, for he feared to arouse his victim too soon, and there were others not far off whose attention he did not wish to excite. The valet came at the summons.

"To bed, to bed with him, good Walram. His highness has quaffed freely—but wine works well for noble natures, and stirs up the generous juices—stay by your master—your care will meet its reward. Gently, gently—" and whilst speaking those words, Scotus assisted the valet to place the unconscious elector on his couch in the adjoining room. Leaving to Walram the task of watching his returning sense, with strict orders not to quit him for a moment, and an assurance that he would speedily return, the Italian closed the door, and pausing for a few moments in the closet, he rapidly took whole handfuls of jewels from the strong box, and thrust them into the various pockets of his dress, rejecting the gold, as mere dross in comparison to the treasures within his grasp. He was soon literally loaded with precious stones to an immense

amount of wealth ; and it was a grievous trial to his cupidity to leave anything behind. But a well-known signal whispered him away. He quitted the closet, holding his cloak closely round him ; and at the door, still open, which led to the corridor communicating with his own apartment, he met his impatient secretary, fearing to come in, and almost breathlessly waiting the Italian's appearance.

"Come, come quickly," said the secretary in a panting whisper ; "she has fled affrighted to the garden. Follow her, or she may escape altogether."

"Let her fly, if she will—the tercel-gentle tied by a silken thread is not more surely in a prince's check than she is now in that of our brave elector."

"And he ?"

"All right and royal ; happy in the excess of love and wine. I've made glorious work of it !"

"Art thou sure and safe in all that has passed ?"

"Kiss me, my Imogen ! throw thy disguised person into my arms—and let thy heart beat against a bed of jewels. Look here, sweet one."

And with the words the Italian showed the inner folds of his vestments glittering with his precious spoils.

"This is indeed a harvest," exclaimed his companion—"and now our work is done. Have I not served thee well, Jerome, throughout this great adventure ?"

"Bravely. But all is not yet complete. Take these glittering baubles, my girl, and stow them safely in the brass-clasped casket. Then bring me the blue case with Duchess Anne's—thou knowest the one I would have—on the instant, to the garden—I will be there. But tell me first how fare thy two noble guests, the brother counts ?"

"Oh, marvellous well, in their separate solitudes. By working on the fears of one and stimulating the other's courage, I have them tuned to thy utmost wishes."

"And the duchess ?"

"In my own chamber, nervously expectant."

"Exquisite wench ! what had I been without thy aid ?"

"Alas, Jerome, I am but a weak fond woman ; the creature of thy purpose."

"The very essence of my art—for woman's faith is the genuine grand magistry."

"Art sure, Jerome, that all works well?"

"Yes, yes, so well that I am lost in wonderment."

"Away, then, away! risk nought by this foolish dalliance."

"Nay, nay—refuse me not. I wanted that kiss, my Imogen, to keep my courage up. Now for the bride!"

In a moment more the Italian was in the garden.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SCOTUS soon found the object of his search walking with agitated movement in one of the dark alleys. As his steps approached, she endeavoured to fly further into the shade. But he quickly overtook her, exclaiming as he advanced,

"Fear nought, fair countess, it is only I, Scotus, your friend's friend—and your own, as I will prove on the instant."

"My friend, Count Scotus! how can you profane the word? How durst you practise this concerted trick upon me? Why was I led here under a base and false pretence, to be exposed to such indignity? Where is the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg? Lead me to her instantly, that I may fly this place."

The brilliant eyes of Agnes de Mansfelt flashed through the darkness with pride and courage as she spoke, and her figure drew up to its utmost strength.

"Countess," replied the Italian, "your whole happiness, your fame, are in my hands—I have alone the power——"

"I hold your power and your impostures in utter scorn. Led away by a rash zeal for my friend's interest I consented to come here, to plead to your honour and your feelings for her sake—and what have I found you? A mean pander to purposes of my disgrace. Lead me to Duchess Anne, and forth from these grounds, that I may seek my brother and my friends. I command you to do so, and you dare not disobey me. O God! another footstep! He is coming—I cannot bear this——"

"No, by every oath in heaven's calendar, he is unconscious even that you are here," cried Scotus, gently seizing Agnes's arm. "He saw your reflection in the glass, 'tis true, when by pure accident he broke upon my privacy—but in the heat of

his intense passion he believes it a vision of his brain. He is this moment insensible—to all things but the anguish of having lost you.”

“Insensible! oh, heavens! then, does he suffer so — does he indeed think of me thus?”

“Earth does not hold a being more wretched than Ghebbard Truchses this moment. Oh, Countess Agnes, let me plead his cause ——”

“Who, then, is this that comes?” exclaimed Agnes, affrighted, as a figure approached.

“Only my faithful attendant, who received you in the palace erewhile, and bearing, as you will see, the accomplishment of the purpose which brought you here. ’Tis well,” added Scotus, taking a case from the hands of his silent messenger — “return to the duchess, and say that Countess Agnes will rejoin her instantly. And now, fair countess, incomparable and irresistible as you are, be not astonished that I have divined the object of your visit, on this night of momentous influence to your own fate and that of so many whom you hold dearest of all the world. Look here — see those gems, which shine not with a thousandth part the lustre of your own eyes — which are not a millionth part the price at which I value your good opinion. These are your friend’s jewels, safe as I received them from her in trust for the attainment of her own happiness. Thank Heaven I have accomplished that, without the sacrifice of the smallest diamond-drop of her rich casket! Take it, then, in your own hands — and place it back in hers — and tell her — you may do so boldly — that within two days her adoring and repentant husband will be in her arms and her own destiny be complete.”

“This is, indeed, an overpowering surprise,” said Agnes, taking the open casket, and letting her eyes rest on the brilliant galaxy of its contents. “How knew you the purpose which brought me here?”

“Press not what is now a worthless question, fair countess; you have the treasure, and I the reward. Believe me to be honest, and I am satisfied to be *thought* ignorant.”

“Oh, Count Scotus, you have indeed read the stars to some purpose!”

“The stars I read the best are woman’s eyes, and those I gaze on even now unfold a wondrous mystery of virtuous self-

sacrifice. Shall I go on, and speak all I would speak, countess?"

"I can put no sure construction on those vague words," replied Agnes, shrinking in the fear that all her thoughts were indeed exposed to the penetrating skill of the Italian.

"Then I will leave nothing to doubt," continued he; "one minute of time to-night is more precious than years of your whole life. Trust me when I tell you so, and now listen. You would, from a bright but meteor motive of virtue, ruin your own happiness in the belief that you are saving that of him who is now and for ever a part and parcel of yourself. You may attempt to fly from, to forget him—in vain, in vain. The glances of those beaming eyes which fall together on one central point are not more inseparable than the fate of Ghebbard Truchses and your own. 'Tis written above, below, in heaven and earth—ye are one and the same for ever! Now, even while I speak to you"—and at these words the Italian raised his arms with the slow imposing motion of pretended inspiration, as he turned his looks up towards the glimmering starlight—"this very instant I see the light of returning consciousness revealed to your lover's brain. He throws out his ardent gaze to find you present—his bosom pants to know that yours heaves in sympathy with his—and he is right—he is assured. The blessed balm of confident affection is in both your hearts this moment, healing all wounds, and offering incense to love's power! Then hesitate no more—give yourself to my guidance. Come, Agnes, come—and let me lead you to that surest heaven of happiness, a faithful lover's arms!"

As the Italian accompanied these words with an attempt to lead Agnes with him, she started back and repelled him with both hands. The questionable nature of his proposal aroused the whole strength of modest apprehension within her, and she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and looking to heaven,

"Oh, why am I exposed to this seduction! where are the natural guardians of my weakness, to shield me in this hour of trial!"

The cunning Italian saw that his point was gained. He had touched her feelings in their keenest sense, and all in favour of his object. He promptly followed up his advantage.

"You doubt me, you have some misgivings, as to the na-

ture of my thoughts!" said he, in a tone of reproachful regret. "Have I deserved this? Hear me then awhile. The feeling that urged you to come here this night, as you believed on your friend's errand, was the spell of your own destiny. I am but an instrument in the hands of fate which points the way. But *he*, he waits with throbbing heart and open arms, to receive his heaven-destined bride, to offer his rank, his state, his soul for her acceptance. I speak his very words — the words he has authorized me to repeat. Can you, then, hesitate to become the wife of this powerful prince, this impassioned lover? I woo you in his name."

Agnes felt the full influence of this speech, uttered with every possible effect of emphasis and accent. Her head swam and her heart beat high. The word *wife*, with all its magic host of bright associations, seemed ringing in a thousand echoes in her mind. The Italian's magical power over others' thoughts was never more clearly proved; but in this case, as in most others, the spell was in the predisposed state of feeling on which he worked. Scotus waited awhile, and then resumed,

"Ah, will not those stubborn and mistaken virtues yield to their own happiness! What more can I say? Would your two brothers' united influence accomplish what I cannot?"

"Oh, would that Christopher were here!"

"And Ernest, would not he, too, sanction your marriage?"

"Alas, I fear he never would!"

"You *fear* his refusal — then you wish for his consent?"

"I did not say so — I meant not to go so far — to give expression to any wish but for my brother's presence."

"Praise to the power that makes me the poor means of meeting any wish of a being like you. Your brother Christopher is now, this very instant, in yonder palace, with heart and soul intent on the accomplishment of your marriage!"

"Here! Christopher here! oh, you sport with me too far, Count Scotus — spare me this excessive trial."

"By Heavens I speak the truth! one minute shall see you in his arms, if you will but return to my apartments."

"And Ernest?"

"Ere your embraces of one brother are unclasped I will bring the other to you."

"But he, alas! will only thwart what that other might hope to effect."

"Leave that to my care, lovely countess; I promise you that Ernest himself shall this very night consent to, at least, if he does not prove the most strenuous to urge, your marriage with the elector."

"Be this influence over others the gift of nature or the work of magic, you are indeed most wonderful!" exclaimed Agnes, now taking the Italian's proffered arm. She stepped forward with him in the direction of the palace, but before she had proceeded a dozen yards the intensity of her various feelings became too much for her. She faltered and stopped; and, leaning on Scotus for support, she at length burst into a flood of tears.

What thoughts, what wishes, what intentions flashed in quick coruscations on the dark mind of the Italian, while this beautiful and innocent being sobbed convulsively on his shoulder, his arm insidiously around her, and the mellowed richness of her figure thus almost within his very clasp? Whatever they might be, the rapid sensitiveness of Agnes was in a moment or two aroused, either by her own innate perceptions, or by some not-to-be-mistaken evidence of emotion on his part. The effect on her was a curdling thrill of disgust; but not from mawkish prudery, or unwomanly coldness. For be it remembered that four-and-twenty hours previously she had received and given back, with unscrupulous delight, the impassioned embraces of another.

A very few minutes more saw Agnes in one of the Italian's suite of rooms; the well known blue-embossed and silver mounted casket fairly in the Duchess of Saxe Coburg's hands, and she gazing through tears of joy, first on her recovered treasures, then on the beloved friend who had restored them to her, and dividing on both kisses which had all the warmth of full-grown ardour mixed with the levity of childhood.

This scene was soon broken in upon by the entrance of Christopher de Mansfelt, ushered in by Scotus. A mutual exclamation of delight burst from both brother and sister as they rushed into each other's arms, almost doubting this realisation of their intense longing. Scotus and the *secretary* immediately retired; and while the latter kept a sort of running watch, between the door of the chamber which contained the

delighted group, and that of the elector's closet which opened into the corridor, the Italian had proceeded to the room which had served for Ernest's long day of prison. He entered and found the latter worn out with anxiety, yet almost wild with joy at seeing his self-named patron again.

"Ah! my friend, how have I laboured in your service—and alas, I fear how hopelessly!" exclaimed Scotus, hastily receiving Ernest's embraces, and flinging himself, as if utterly exhausted, on a couch.

"I know all you would ask me," resumed he, giving Ernest no time for inquiry or remark—"I have found her, after a long day of search, and *where* think you? why in this very palace, where she came voluntarily, of her own good will, and where at this moment, in league with the Duchess Anne and your brother Christopher, she is making preparations for the wedding."

"Oh, Agnes, Agnes! Lost to me then for ever," sobbed forth De Mansfelt, sinking on a chair and looking so lamentable that the Italian could scarcely have commanded his countenance at any time less pregnant with eventful matter.

"Ay, for ever and ever," said he briskly, "if you have not nerve, moral nerve, enough to enter into a plan which I have formed, and to carry it through."

"Oh, tell it to me, I am ready for any thing that may secure my sister to me."

"In the first place, then, you must deny—and, if you choose, you may root the fact out of your mind—that she is your sister."

"How! Agnes not my sister!"

"Now tell me honestly, Count Ernest, have you never felt something whispering loudly in your heart that you were not a Mansfelt?"

"Not a ——"

"That the warm blood whose eddies boiled eternally towards Agnes was not the same by nature as that with which it longed to mix? That Christian men love not their sisters with a love like that? That religion shrinks aghast, and that mortals would hide their face, from the spectacle of a brother binding his own flesh and blood in a vow which falls little short of a marriage contract?"

"A marriage ——"

"That you never could have done all this — that nature had revolted within you at the very first step, had you not been, in fact, an alien to the noble house you represent — of rank *more* high perhaps, that matters not — but one removed in infancy from your own natural cradle, and surreptitiously placed in one that was not your birthright? Some wandering Egyptians were the most likely agents in this foul transaction, which gave you, 'tis true, the inheritance of a fine title and an estate nine-tenths squandered, but robbed you of the rapturous right to make Agnes de Mansfelt your bride, a possession worth the empire! Have you had no warnings of all this? Are you not now ready to act on it? Answer me quickly, or you are too late — Time flies."

"I cannot, Count Scotus, answer such a wild mass of fiction heard now for the first time. I cannot see your drift ——"

"Then, by Heavens, I cannot find eyes for one so blind! But at any rate you can hear — then mark me! Your designs on Agnes — nay, hear me out — will be to-morrow the common talk of Germany, your best excuse for flying to the elector's arms, the total blasting of your character! I offer you a plan and my assistance for your own justification, and the possession of that model of beauty for which you pine and die, despite of all your pious resistance to the passion which consumes you."

"Count, count, this is monstrous — I feel no passion, nothing of the kind ——"

"You do, you do, my friend, although you know it not. I see this moment the false lustre of eye which carries death to the possessor. I mark you shrivelling away in the fierce struggle."

"I have no struggle —"

"Yes, yes, you have, and you sink fast under it. Will you then brave religious scruples, the world's scorn, her own repugnance, and carry her off — I have the means at hand — and then we can easily forge documents that nothing may gainsay — you know my skill already to prove the whole of what you call a fiction, and secure you the bliss you so well merit, and so desperately languish for?"

"Oh, gracious Heaven, protect me from this frightful plot! exclaimed the terror-stricken De Mansfelt, springing up and striding to the furthest corner of the room. "I feel my blood

running cold, and my heart is cramped. Oh, what a hideous proposition you have made to me! Can this really be Count Scotus, the sworn friend of my family, who suggests this diabolical scheme? Has my conduct indeed brought down those accursed imputations on myself, those frightful suspicions on Agnes? Oh, let me lose her for ever, sooner than risk this terrible stigma — let me at once deliver myself up to the vengeance of her libertine seducer — let me be racked with a thousand deaths, to expiate this even involuntary guilt! Has my pure affection merited this construction? Has my life given warrant for it? Count Scotus, tell me what could have put all this into your head?"

"My knowledge of the human heart — you may not be aware of what is working in yours," replied the Italian coolly.

"Good God! Can I be such a wretch? Better then to die at once, and rid my dear sister of such a monster from her path of life!"

"Much better to help her on ~~your~~ brotherly hand; to give her to the man who only waits ~~your~~ consent to wed her honourably and endow her richly; to forward your own fortune in ensuring her's, and free ye both from the dead weight of an engagement which, but to yourselves, carries a damning evidence of guilt."

"I agree in every word — but what has changed you so? You who so strenuously opposed this marriage?"

"No matter, no matter, I did not then know what the world said of you, or what you really felt or intended, or — but that is no matter now. Will you act up, and on the spot, to your present conviction, and join your sister and your brother, and your common friend the duchess, and meet the enamoured elector by and by, to give a joint consent?"

"Oh, yes, willingly, anxiously — there is nothing else left for me but this desperate alternative. But do you think me safe in trusting myself to Truchses? Will you promise me your protection?"

"To be sure I will, against man or demon — but in this case you need it not. Now let us lose no time."

Ernest traversed a couple of chambers with the Italian for his guide, not quite unapprehensive of some lurking enemy behind the loose and faded tapestry; but his heart swelled with joy when he heard the voice of his brother in a neighbouring

room ; and the moment that saw him once more embracing Agnes — and with a feeling more really fraternal than ever he knew before — was perhaps the happiest he had ever passed.

A scene of rapid discussion and brief explanation took place. Scotus took care to mix in and manage it in just such a way as to leave his own conduct in an apparent aspect of candour, cleverness, and general benevolence, in which every individual present, with Ernest's exception, was disposed to view it ; and as for him, he was now of too small importance to the great result to make his opinion of any material value.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was exactly twelve o'clock on the night of the transactions just recorded, when Jan Hilpaert the chief burgomaster of Cologne, Herman Oppenheim his colleague, Ludwig Bender, and Christian Zomerhausen, two of the town council, and the learned syndic of the city, met in select and secret conclave in one of the private rooms of the town house, to debate on certain matters of moment touching the electorate at large and the interests of the city in particular. These worthy burghers were among the most determined enemies of Ghebhard Truchses, and the system of which he was the enlightened and persevering patron. They were thorough-going conservatives, sturdy sticklers for the preservation of abuses on which they lived and thrived, and on all possible occasions endeavouring to confirm others in the prejudices which they had inherited from their forefathers for several generations.

"Well, my good masters," exclaimed the chief magistrate, as he entered the room where the others were assembled ; "Here I am, punctual as the clapper which strikes midnight this very moment on the great bell of St. Genevieve."

"And as noisy as the one and as empty as the other," whispered Oppenheim to the syndic (for jealousy and envy found its way into the feelings of those political associates), while the rest welcomed the new comer and complimented him on his being so well up to time.

"Now, fellow-citizens," resumed the burgomaster, "let us

to the subject of debate, for truth to tell, frau Hilpaert looked with an angry eye when I left my house, and vowed she would sit up till my return."

"The worthy dame knows well your truant ways, neighbour Johan," said Zomerhausen, with a chuckle.

"Aha! friend Christian, art thou satirical and slanderous to-night? Take care, take care that I do not retort, and give a hint to your good dame about the little Jewess close to the Kirch-gasse."

"I defy your worship, I defy you—I am well known to hate the whole race of Jews, and more especially the father of little Zillah."

"Yes, and, like a good Christian, thou makest amends to the daughter for thy ill-will to the sire—is not that it?"

"Whatever you like, your worship; I can bear all your raillery, for I can truly say I never keep *my* frau waiting."

"Then thou art a miracle of a man, friend Christian, and thy wife may well be called a well-served gentlewoman."

"Good, good! give over, neighbour Zomerhausen—you'll get nothing but hard knocks in an encounter of wit with his worship—good, good! ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed Ludwig Bender, a constant feeder at the burgomaster's table, the official laughter at his jokes, and the defender of all his measures in the council.

"Methinks this light talk is scarcely meet for the serious business we have in hand, brother Hilpaert," said Oppenheim, with a scowl.

"Tut, tut! brother Herman, don't look so grave, or throw a gloom over the star-light which was just clearing the heavens as I came in. We must to business with gay hearts, clear heads——"

"And comforted stomachs, say I,—your worship will pardon the interruption—and therefore I commend ye all to this bowl of spiced hippocras," said Zomerhausen.

"A happy thought, friend Christian, and the cordial is even less likely than your worthy helpmate to be kept waiting," replied Hilpaert, dipping a glass into the bowl.

"Good, good! your worship's wit flows freely to-night," cried Bender, following the example.

"And thou, kind Ludwig, art, I see, as ready as ever to draw thine at the same source."

"Ha, ha, ha! good, excellent good!"

"The wine or the wit, Master Bender?" growled Herman Oppenheim.

"Both, most respected second burgomaster," replied the parasite; "the one comes from his worship's cellar, and the other from his brain; and let me tell you that each is, in its way, the fountain head."

"Which is a good place whereat to draw water, but scarcely so for wine, Ludwig," said Hilpaert, helping himself again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Bender, "but while your worship drinks after this fashion, and the good wine mounts to your head, you need not fear water on the brain, at any rate."

"Pray, pray, brother Hilpaert, let us stop the filtering of this foolery and proceed to business," cried Oppenheim, impatiently, and emptying the glass which he too had filled.

"To business, then, to business, but let us keep our tempers."

"What, such a bad one as the second burgomaster's!" exclaimed Bender.

"Come, come, brother Oppenheim and friend Ludwig, no bickering, no bickering," said Hilpaert, stopping the retort which he saw rising in his colleague's throat. "Let us leave that to our heretic enemies in the chapter. We must all pull together—fill one bumper more, my friends, and stick to each other closely in the common cause. Now, good Master Syndic, please to unroll your papers, and get your pen out of its case to note down our resolutions. Take seats, my masters, and let's to business."

The burgomaster threw off his Minevar-lined and overlapped cloak as he spoke these words, settled his ruff round his neck with an air of important preparation, pulled down the flaps of his doublet, eased the brass-studded leathern belt which bound his portly waist, and took possession of the stuffed arm-chair at the head of the table. His companions made their respective preparations, and occupied the seats at either side, the taciturn syndic trimming the lamp which stood in the middle, and spreading his writing materials before him.

"Now, good my friends and fellow citizens, having all well matured our notions on the great events which are about to burst out in the electorate, this is the final sitting of us, the most worshipful secret committee of the general town council

of Cologne, to decide on the measures to be put in force to-morrow, that glorious day which is to see the overthrow of our arch-tyrant, and the consolidation of our rights and privileges as by law established."

"Good, good!" cried Bender.

"Yes, my worthy friend, you are right, it is good," continued the burgomaster, warmed by his sycophant's praise,— "right good to see men resolved to stand by their privileges" —

"And by each other," observed Zomerhausen.

"Don't interrupt me, friend Christian! — Resolved to stand and to fall in upholding the usages and customs of their country, and the—the customs and usages of their forefathers. Never, fellow-citizens, shall it be said that the men of Cologne were backwards in coming forwards in such a mighty cause. Never shall a haughty sovereign, a heretic in his heart and a tyrant in his intentions—let him go to mass ever so regularly, or act for the good of the people ever so much—never shall such a sovereign keep a free people in chains."

"Excellent good!"

"Hush, Master Bender, and let our chief magistrate finish his luminous speech," said Oppenheim with a sneer, which the syndic acknowledged by a wink.

"And now," resumed Hilpaert, "now that I have opened the business of this our secret and extraordinary sitting, I leave the way clear for such as wish to follow on the same side of the question, being resolved to maintain the right of free discussion as long as I have the honour to fill this chair."

"With a most unwieldy mass of flesh and a proportionate explosion of folly," whispered his colleague to the syndic, who thereupon pursed up his lips, and strove to twist them into a sidelong smile.

"Brother Oppenheim, you have, in right of your office, which is only second to my own in dignity, the priority of speech. What have you to say?"

"What have your eloquence and wisdom left me to say, Brother Hilpaert, but that I agree with your sentiments, espouse your opinions, and think the sooner we proceed to business the better?"

"To business! is not this business, may I ask your worshipful respectability? Is it not business to have our minds fixed

and our hearts braced up by the exciting words of his worship the chief burgomaster?" asked Ludwig Bender.

"Yes," cried Zomerhausen, who wriggled on his seat with impatience to begin his oration, "I think it is, and business of the right sort too, whatever our worthy second burgomaster may think. And I am bold to say that this is no time for flinching and wavering, when a great blow is to be struck. What! shall we wait to be crushed altogether by the tyranny that this reforming prelate is letting loose upon us? Shall we suffer innovation to sap our foundations, and have our venerable institutions pulled about our ears? Shall we allow this elector to have our children taught more than we know ourselves, to fasten down the rising generation to desks and benches, and encourage them to laugh at us and their other ancestors, for our ignorance of the new-fangled trash that they are to be crammed with? Did our fathers, or our grandfathers, or their grandfathers know how to read or write, eh? and did not the world wag as well in their days as in ours? Did it not always go round? Have Guttenberg, Fust, or Schoeffer, with all their types and presses, changed its course? Then shall we, the notables of this great city, stand quiet while we are shoved from our seats by the raff and rubbish we have so long ruled over? Must our delightful banquets be opened to every hungry citizen who has hitherto only had the privilege of paying the bill? Why should our old-established customs be changed? What harm do we do to any one by holding fast to the rights which were handed down to us by our progenitors? We are told by this tyrant sovereign of ours that we owe a debt to posterity. Indeed! What did posterity ever lend us? In which of your books, my fellow-citizens, is posterity to be found on the credit side? But let me tell you, my friends, that we are posterity. Perhaps you never thought of that. Yes, we are posterity, and we will in our justice do for our posterity what our ancestors in their wisdom did for theirs—that is for us.—We will stick to our old customs, and our vested rights, and our holy religion, and leave an example behind us, like those who went before us, for those who come after us, and who shall never overtake us, if we can prevent them from treading on our heels! And now, most worshipful chief burgomaster, I have finished."

"Good Master Syndic, have you taken down the words of my own and the other worthy committee-men's speeches?" asked Hilpaert.

"The sense, not the exact words, your worship."

"So, Master Syndic, you'll be indicted under the new reform, for holding a sinecure," said Oppenheim in an under tone, giving at the same time a nudge with his elbow to his learned neighbour; and the latter displayed a contortion of countenance thereat.

"I beg your worship's pardon," said Zomerhausen, starting up again, as though he had just found some loose-scattered memoranda on his brain — "I forgot, that is to say I left out, or omitted, or, as one may say, put aside, an observation, which is, I may venture to flatter myself, of some importance to this great question. I therefore take leave to remark that we must — we ought — that is, we are bound to hold fast to our rights and privileges — and that the dues, duties, tolls, and taxes, which we levy by immemorial prescription on the citizens, are as much our corporate property, as the blessed impost of tithes is that of the holy church, or the private domains of those pestilential innovators Nuenar, Wissemburg, Kreichlingen, and the rest are their proper possessions, and that any, the least attempt at composition, commutation, or reduction, such as is contemplated by the heretical tyrant who for the time rules over us, is sacrilege and treason —"

"So think I," said Hilpaert.

"And I," chimed in Bender.

"— Is sacrilege and treason to our corporate immunities," continued Zomerhausen, "and I would moreover impress on ye all, my worthy fellow-citizens and fellow-labourers in the great good cause of conservatism, on ye all I say, that we are as may be said posterity, and that we ought in justice to do for our posterity, what our ancestors in their wisdom did for their posterity —"

"Methinks, good Christian, you said that before," remarked Oppenheim, drily.

"No matter if he did, worthy colleague — a good thing may be said twice over, to stimulate our honourable zeal in the holy cause of conservatism," said Hilpaert.

"Which the elector and his reforming gang have the ferocious insolence to call monopoly and abuse," added Oppenheim,

in a tone which seemed to insinuate that the coarse sense of the rough and sarcastic burgher admitted the truth of the imputation he affected to repudiate.

"And for which reason," said Hilpaert, consequentially, "we are all resolved as one man to overthrow and drive out the arch profligate and his noxious crew — and it is therefore the decision and decree of this secret and extraordinary committee, that the rising of the people *does* take place to-morrow — which means this blessed day of St. Urbain, May the 25th, *Anno Domini* 1579 — for it is now near one o'clock in the morning — and that the negotiation already opened some hours ago by our secret agent with the mercenaries of Leignitz be carried into effect as soon as the officer deputed to treat with us arrives — and *potz tausend!* why is he not here already? and that our old allegiance is hereby and henceforward declared forfeited and null, and our new fidelity to be on the spot pledged to his Highness Ernest of Bavaria, Prince-bishop of Liege, our sovereign elector that is to be, from this time forth — and so, kind Master Syndic, if thou hast already inscribed these our solemn resolutions, let's all now sign — for his highness the bishop will not much longer tarry: and he, our secret agent, known only to his highness the bishop and to me as head of the corporation, whose name let no man ask for, must soon be here. Is all ready for signing?"

"The heads are all down, your worship."

"That's just what our tyrant would like to be able to say of the town-council, Master Syndic."

"Aha, aha! good, good, your worship!" was Ludwig Bender's very original commentary on this somewhat unseasonable joke of the burgomaster.

"Now, my worshipful masters, take the pen, and sign, so please ye," said the syndic.

"There is my cross," said Hilpaert, putting his mark.

"And mine," added Oppenheim.

"So, that stands for me, Ludwig Bender."

"And there is the token of my consent," exclaimed Zomerhausen, throwing down the pen, which the syndic took up again to certify the authenticity of the various marks.

"Ah, good syndic," observed Hilpaert, while the learned clerk was writing, "what a lucky thing it is that you are

so phlegmatic and philosophical, with all that mass of learning in your head and at your fingers' ends! If we could read and write as you do, what an inflammatory set of fellows we should be! Heaven protect our children and their children from the incendiary designs of those reformers!"

At this moment a knock twice repeated was heard against the iron plate which was nailed to the private door leading from the street to the council-room.

"They are come, they are come, that is the signal," said one of the party. Another called the attendant who dozed away his hour of watch in the ante-room; and in a moment or two more the door was opened, and three individuals entered the chamber. One of these was, without disguise or concealment, the Ritter Heinrich Von Sweinishen. The other two wore black velvet masks; but one of these was immediately thrown aside, and the naturally harsh, yet affectedly bland and insinuating, expression of Ernest of Bavaria's countenance was exposed to the admiring gaze of the party.

CHAPTER XX.

THE citizens received the intriguing prelate with profound humility, that sort of sordid reverence which is too often lavished, even in these enlightened times, on men of rank, and which naturally generates in the latter an over-insolent pride in their own station, and a deep contempt for its idolaters.

"Most gracious and reverend prince," said Hilpaert, "I give your highness welcome and much thanks for your condescension, in the name of the corporate gratitude and fidelity of the town-council of this good city, here at this present time assembled ——"

"Represented," whispered Oppenheim.

"That is to say represented, in the person of myself—the chief magistrate—and those other respectable and enlightened burghers, my good friends and colleagues in the due government of the same. Be it therefore known to your gracious and renowned high-mightiness, that, after due de-

liberation and sagacious examination, we have unanimously resolved, in the name of our fellow-citizens, — leaving to the rest of the electorate to follow our bright example, — that our allegiance to the tyrant Ghebhard is from this hour cancelled and void, and is henceforward handed over in full and ample possession to your aforesaid high-mightiness, your heirs”——

“Successors, friend Johan: his reverence is a bishop, and cannot have heirs,” whispered Oppenheim, glad of an opportunity of putting his colleague out.

“— Your high-mightiness’s successors—and—hem! and—so forth, and so forth, and so forth,” babbled the discomposed burgomaster, who never could recover the broken thread of his labyrinthian orations.

“Excellent good!” exclaimed Bender, coming to his patron’s relief.

“And, gracious and reverend Prince,” said Zomerhausen, stepping impatiently forward, “if an humble individual like myself, totally unaccustomed to public speaking,”——

“Worthy citizens! and, as I may, I trust, already call ye, faithful subjects!” said the bishop, promptly placing a dam before the coming flood of eloquence, “I know well your sentiments, and I will not do ye the injustice to require a new expression of them. Pray be seated all, that we may, without loss of time, consult on the measures required at this critical moment.”

“He might have heard my speech, though,” said Zomerhausen to Oppenheim, in a subdued voice, and with a crest-fallen look, as they each took a chair.

“And not be a bit the wiser, friend Christian,” was the consolatory reply, to which it was impossible to make any retort, for the bishop, in a firm and decided tone, claimed the attention of his listeners to the statement which he rapidly made of the forces he had at hand, and the means by which he meant to put them into motion, to aid the popular movement which was to burst out the same morning for the dethronement of Ghebhard Truchses, the seizure of his person, and the proclamation of Ernest’s accession to the electorate, to be confirmed and solemnised by the concurrence of the plenipotentiaries of both the emperor and the pope, who were provided with all the official documents of ban and anathema for simultaneous promulgation on the occasion.

"And now, my kind friends," continued Bishop Ernest, "this completion of our long labours wants, for a due winding up, only the announcement that this gallant officer, Ritter Heinrich Von Sweinishen, the chief finance minister of his highness, my royal cousin Prince Henry of Leignitz, who, by a happy dispensation of Providence, has opportunely arrived among us at this crisis,—this gallant officer, I say, in the name and with the full authority of his royal master, has promptly acceded to the proposition of this my noble, but, for reasons of state, disguised friend, to join the whole force of his levies to our own, renouncing the attempted tampering with his highness's independent and disinterested high principles, already essayed by your arch-enemy, whom we may now call the *late* elector of Cologne."

"Long live Ernest of Bavaria!" cried Hilpaert, plunging his goblet into the bowl, which had been replenished by the attendant, and of which the bishop had, half haughtily, half complaisantly, already refused to partake.

"Ernest for ever!" echoed Bender, drinking deeply.

"Hurra! huzza! huzza! hurra!" shouted the others, each quaffing a bumper the while.

"Hush, hush! prudence, my over-zealous friends!" said the bishop, "the time is not yet come for this heart-gladdening avowal. Some hours hence I hope to hear the streets ringing with your shouts; and I pledge myself, in advance, to proclaim and preserve to ye—as I have often before promised—all your rights, privileges, and immunities as by law established, and by long usage sanctified, and as originally decreed by the wisdom of your ancestors."

"Long live our ancestors!" vociferated Hilpaert, with reverential and tipsy enthusiasm, and the others chorussed the cry, while the bishop smiled, Ritter Heinrich twisted his mustachios, and the black mask shook as if the wearer laughed heartily behind it.

"Now, Master Burgomaster, and worthy citizens, listen to the conditions of the Ritter," said the bishop.

"Conditions!" murmured the burghers with one voice.

"Yes, gentlemen, conditions. You did not expect that my royal master and a sovereign prince was to condescend to join the cause of a corporation without a due equivalent?" exclaimed Ritter Heinrich, with an air of most perfect disdain,

for long experience told him the best way of treating with the vulgar and sordid.

"In such a cause methinks there should be no demur, when the point at stake is to cripple the means of the arch-enemy—the destroyer of your rights—the trampler down of your privileges—the spoliator of your immunities—and to strengthen your own hands for the overthrow of his tyranny," said the bishop.

"No, certainly not—by no means—pray, most worshipful Ritter, let us hear the terms proposed for his Highness Prince Henry's services," said Hilpaert.

"Services!" fiercely ejaculated the Ritter—while the bishop cast a dissatisfied glance at the burgomaster, and the man in the velvet mask started back and threw up his hands with real or feigned surprise.

"Alliance was the word my worthy colleague would have used," remarked Oppenheim.

"Oh, that is quite a different thing!" exclaimed Von Sweinishen.

"Not much difference methinks, Master Syndic, if they are to be equally paid for," whispered Oppenheim.

"Umph!" answered the syndic.

"The terms, the terms?" said Hilpaert, with a hiccup composed chiefly of mulled hippocras.

"Speak out, noble cavalier, in the name of your royal master," said the bishop.

"In obedience to the orders of your highness, and in hopes of producing on those worshipful magistrates a due impression of my master's moderation, I proceed to state the conditions on which he graciously condescends to place at their disposal the whole of his imposing force of four thousand gallant veterans, ready to turn the tide of the coming contest; and with a due and ample recruitment thereof the number may be speedily doubled, tripled, or quadrupled——"

"At our expense," muttered Oppenheim.

"Ay, my masters, or quintupled, so as to guarantee this noble city against any possible attack of the Dutch troops under William of Nassau, of any marauding excursion from the Spanish forces of the Prince of Parma, or from any sudden surprise from the Protestant allies of this tyrant Truchses,

who will all be a-foot by and by, to serve themselves under pretext of aiding him."

"These are but remote contingencies, Herr Ritter," stammered Hilpaert, who had still, in spite of the spiced wine, sense and sight enough left to see clearly through that particular species of mist christened since his days mystification.

"Far-off advantages," said Bender.

"Little-to-be-dreaded dangers," growled Zomerhausen.

"Nothing but smoke," growled Oppenheim.

"Umph!" exclaimed the syndic.

"But then, my worshipful masters, there is the unmolested navigation of the Rhine to be secured from here to Holland, and from Holland to the sea, and thence to——"

"The Antipodes, if we had ships to carry us there and an object in going," said Oppenheim, more briskly than usual. "But, in a word, most noble Ritter, what does your master ask for the hire of himself and his men to aid our present purpose, the only one now under consideration?"

"Well then, in a word, and since *hire* is the word you insist on, worshipful sir, a present of ten thousand crowns to himself, five thousand to be distributed among his officers, a largess of as many more to his men, and free quarters, good rations, and reasonable pay for the whole of his legion from this day forth during the continuance of the war."

"A most disinterested and magnanimous prince," snarled Oppenheim.

"Very!" stammered Hilpaert; while the rest of the party stared in astonishment at those exorbitant demands.

"Gentlemen, my royal master's sword may turn the balance just now—and both scales are open," said the Ritter.

"True, and it seems that the highest bidder may make either kick the beam," replied Oppenheim. "But in this case a little time for deliberation must be allowed. Give us an hour, Ritter, and we shall decide, and duly return you our final answer. In the meantime we have mighty things on hand. The various sections of the city will be early a-foot, and much is to be done by sunrise. My worthy colleague here seems inclined to doze."

"Not at all," said Hilpaert, bouncing up, "I am ready for action—I shall but return to my wife for an hour, to set matters to right, and then——"

"You will be as ready as ever to do wrong," was Oppenheim's half-audible commentary.

"Then, worthy friend, you will proceed from family to public duty, like a giant refreshed," said the bishop, giving into the humour of his citizen supporters, and himself elated to the highest pitch by the near approach of what he had long reckoned on as an assured and easy triumph. In his many stolen visits to Cologne, which, from the devotion of the town-magistrates to his cause, were matters of no risk or difficulty, he had satisfied himself that the moment the explosion was to take place the authority of Truchses would be overthrown. In the whole city the latter had but few partisans, and those only among the liberal and Protestant party in the chapter, formed of the aristocracy of the city and neighbourhood. The besotted people were almost all against him, worked on by the numerous and bigoted clergy, and supported in their hatred and hostility to their sovereign by every possible argument addressed to their prejudices and their cupidity. The Bishop of Liege held at its true value the promised assistance of Liegnitz's half-formed and widely-scattered legion. He knew that Von Sweinishen asked too much, but he was also convinced that he would abate in his demand, and he cared little how much the rich citizens, his anticipated subjects, were mulcted for the object of depriving the rival he wanted to supplant of what might turn out after all a troublesome acquisition to either friends or foes. He had readily admitted to his presence, at the secret rendezvous where his adherents were assembled, the Ritter Heinrich, who had been with such apparent facility won over to listen to the overtures of the secret agent by whom he was introduced to the bishop.

Need we tear the mask off that secret agent's face? No, our readers will admit that we have not attempted to throw any mystery over the unmitigated rascalities of Jerome Scotus. The following conversation took place between him and his reverend and all but royal employer, when they quitted the town-house and wended their way towards one of the city-gates, having left the five members of the secret committee to debate on the Ritter's proposal, and left him free to follow whatever employment he chose to seek during the hour demanded for deliberation, at the expiration of which he was to return for his answer.

"Heaven be praised, we have now a moment for free converse, count ! I am beyond reach of the wine-flavoured flattery of those coarse burghers, and you need not wear a mask either on your face or your thoughts. Tell me then the particulars of Ghebbard's last scene of ruin, for you have assured me it is consummated," said the bishop.

"To your highness's heart's content ; at daybreak he will be bound fast to a wife, and as closely wedded to utter destruction," replied Scotus, coolly.

"Madman and renegade at once ! How well you must have worked on him, my unrivalled friend, my right arm in this great enterprise ! How your deepest depths of knowledge must have been fathomed ! Can I ever repay this wondrous service ?"

"In truth, your highness, 'tis not amiss that the thought of remuneration should pass across your brain, for methinks the hour of my reward is fairly come."

"So think I, my valued friend, and you shall not find me ungrateful. When once my hated rival is fairly netted——"

"He is so now. He and the whole of that pestilent crew of Mansfelts, brought together into his palace by no small labour on my part—Nuenar, Kriechlingen, all to a man, in short, of your most dangerous enemies, are now entrapped and only waiting to be crushed by one blow."

"But Truchses has not yet actually set the seal on his perdition by his final act of apostacy. — You promised me, Count Scotus, that you would see him married, out of the pale of possible redemption, under the very ban of civil and religious vengeance. This has not yet come to pass."

"Nor shall it, I fairly tell your highness, til I am settled with and amply paid. Need I boast that I have some knowledge of the minds of men ? or add that I have known some who falter and break down on the very last step of their most important undertakings ? Good faith is a grand quality between associates in any enterprise, and your highness will allow that ours has been no common one."

"Dear count, respected friend, invaluable ally, what would these words express ?"

"Precisely what I feel, and have felt for some time past, your highness—that you do not come to the point—that I have done my duty in your cause, well and with eminent suc-

cess, and that I expect on the spot, peremptorily, but most respectfully, the full measure of my reward and of your promise."

"It is just, it is just, the labourer is worthy of his hire—but how is it possible now, in this hour of confusion and intricacy, to comply with this demand for prompt payment? There are no writing materials at hand, of fitting sort for the document I would willingly draw up, to pledge myself legally—since, it seems, you have doubts of my honourable and princely word——"

"Heaven forbid! your highness cannot surely suspect me of such irreverence—but these are times of peril; to-day's doings may bring many a head to earth; Truchses and his followers may become desperate—a sacrilegious hand might dare to strike even Heaven's anointed and the people's choice——"

"What do you say, count? You do not think there will be any resistance? Surely the unanimity of the citizens in my favour and the help of my own people scattered in the guise of peasants and artisans through the town, with the aid of those fierce reitres—would to God those stupid burghers had come in at once to the terms of that captain!—All this *must* secure our cause against the possibility of failure! You think so, don't you? You have made your calculations?"

"Yes, your highness, I am sure of it—I have made my calculations—but a random blow, a shot from an arquebuss, a stone thrown, the falling of a tile might baffle them all."

"I am *almost* thinking, my dear and valued count, that I had better not myself appear till every thing is over and settled, that it would perhaps be more dignified for me to return to Liege and wait awhile."

"Your highness had better not think that *downright*, lest the notion get possession of your better reason and run away with it. Your highness surely does not want nerve to go through with the adventure you have embarked in? Better, if so, never to have trusted yourself in a revolution, where personal courage is the first virtue and the surest element of success."

"Count Scotus, you do me wrong," said the bishop, stopping, and in a voice, if not actually stern, at least firm; "I am neither a coward nor a promise-breaker. Nor am I of that

reckless temperament that throws the goods of life and life itself into a thousand vulgar and ignoble risks ; caution is an instinct with me, even were it not a principle ! 'Tis in my nature, and without its ample exercise this long wrought plan might have never come to a head. The not-to-be-avoided chances of failure I, like all players for a great stake, have made up my account for ; but you will at least allow I reduced them to the lowest point in seeking you out, and bringing you from far to be my chief auxiliary and constant counsellor."

"And I served you well, from the first moment of our engagement up to this which is nearly the last. Be steady then as well as cautious ; act honestly for my sake and boldly for your own. All is not yet over."

After this reply the bishop walked silently on, guided by his companion. After they had proceeded some time, the former, as if rousing from a reverie, started and spoke.

"Where are we going, count?" said he, looking around him in the gloom. "It seems to me as though we wandered from our path to the rendezvous."

"Trust to me, your highness ; I know the road."

"It is well ; I do trust you. And now, Count Scotus, I have been thinking, that were it possible to procure pen and ink, and paper, such as suits the usages of my rank, I could at once appease your doubts, if any exist, as to my fair intentions towards you, by giving you a draft on my treasurer at Liege, for prompt payment of a sum that will, I think, nobly satisfy your expectations, however short it may fall of your high deserts. What say you ?"

"That I am quite satisfied with your highness's better thoughts, and that there is a place at hand, with every requisite to meet your generous intentions."

"Then lead me to it."

They had not proceeded far when they met a person on horseback, leading another steed, both furnished with saddlebags as if prepared for a journey. The bishop turned his head aside to avoid observation, and stepped briskly forward. Looking round in a moment more for his companion, he saw him evidently speaking to the person on horseback ; and he heard a murmured phrase of Italian, but he could not distinguish the words nor judge who was the speaker.

"Your highness's pardon!" exclaimed Scotus, as he came forward, "we are near the place I spoke of."

"Are you known to that passer-by, good count?"

"My mask is not, your highness?"

"You spoke Italian?"

"Perhaps I did, but what of that?"

"Oh! nothing, but that it sounded oddly."

"To hear a man speak his native language? Beware of suspicion—or at least of betraying its existence. Your highness's instinct of caution may degenerate if you do not watch it closely. Now we are arrived, I pray your highness to enter—I follow."

This timely hint to the bishop's pride or his prudence produced its full effect. Without an instant's hesitation he entered the wicket, which Scotus held in his hand; the latter immediately followed and closed the gate; and the bishop found himself in the garden where the reader has been already more than once. The Bishop of Liege was right in the estimate of his own character. He did not quite want courage. He could at times be almost a brave man—but was too cautious to be ever a bold one. In the present instance he felt that, be his doubts or his suspicions what they might, it would be madness to let them sink into fear. Had the night not been so dark his keen-eyed companion might have discovered that the bishop's cheek was pale. But neither his step nor his mind faltered, as the Italian led the way through the oft-threaded intricacies of the palace-garden. At length he reached a low vestibule, opened a door, and passed into a narrow corridor where a lamp was a-light. In a moment more he and his reverend and princely follower were in Scotus's own apartment.

"And now, Count Scotus, may I ask where am I?" said the bishop, looking around with a scrutinising, yet not a timid, gaze.

"In the electoral palace," answered the Italian, fixing a glance meant to probe deeper than the mere expression of the inquirer's face. A convulsive movement of the shoulders and hands, a quick frown, and a moment's opening of the mouth were the only discoverable evidences of emotion. Whether the bishop's heart leaped or sank was not to be known.

"And for what purpose?" asked he, with a calm and haughty tone.

"Merely to give your highness all facilities for drawing up the document you spoke of."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the bishop with a faint smile, and a not ill-feigned ease of manners, "this is indeed taking possession somewhat before my time. What would my rival say were he to know that I am going to sign the reward for his ruin on his own table!"

"He would ratify the deed, and call it a gratuity for having secured his happiness."

"Well, well, that is a matter of opinion — but let me do the work which brought us here, for the sooner we finish this frolic the better. Is egress as easy as ingress, count?"

"That — like most things — depends on circumstances, your highness. Here are materials for writing such as are in all ways worthy of you;" and with these words Scotus opened an escrutoire, and placed a chair before it. The bishop took possession; and wrote with a hurried pen, which he meant to make an excuse for a not over-steady hand.

"Now, count, as to the sum? what say you? You know I never specified any particular amount as that which you were to be entitled to for this service."

"I think your highness once said, some ten days back, something as to your considering fifty thousand crowns not a too high price for the assistance I was even then affording you."

"Did I? then I will now put a hundred thousand into the treasury order. Are you satisfied, count?"

"Quite so, even if it pleases your highness to write but *one* and leave out the *hundred*."

The bishop now smiled in earnest, at the Italian's pretended disinterestedness and at the pleasant conviction that he was completely outwitting that arch impostor. The fact was that the sovereign's order on the public treasury of the principality of Liege was not worth a groschen without the counter-signature of a minister, and a particular seal of office, but would, on the contrary, render any one presenting it for payment subject to instant arrestation. Had the bishop written a draft on the private intendant of his own personal funds or private

possessions the matter had been different, and it had been instantly paid to any produceable amount.

The bishop steadily signed his name, and affixed a seal stamped by his own signet-ring which he carried about him, and he dated the document, at Scotus's suggestion, and himself enjoying the addition, to what he considered all through a good joke, "from our electoral palace at Cologne."

"Truly, Count Scotus, no sovereign's *escrutoire* could be better supplied with paper of rare device and wax of right royal brilliancy and odour ; and as surely may I add that no sovereign sign-manual or signet was ever applied with greater pleasure to a secret rescript. Take it, then, and keep it till the day comes when it may suit you to act on this document, and receive the recompence of your high and honourable service."

"The day has almost come, your highness, for I see it beginning to glimmer above the tree-tops in the garden ; and I could not pay so ungracious a return for your gracious intentions as to let them linger unfulfilled."

With these words Scotus placed the paper carefully within his doublet's folds. The bishop rose, and, casting some rapid looks around the room, in which various articles of dress, open trunks, books, and scientific instruments were scattered in disorder, he moved towards the door by which he had entered, and with as much composure as he could command, he proposed retreating from the palace which the announced approach of daylight made now a thousand-fold more disagreeable than before.

"Your highness cannot surely believe that I have merely brought you here for the poor selfishness of securing for myself the execution of this paper ? No, I have had a higher purpose in view. Having received the title to an overgenerous reward for my poor services, I would now convince you, by the evidence of your own ears at least, that our joint object is attained. Look here," continued Scotus, raising the tapestry, and opening a small door, "this narrow passage leads up directly to the partition wall of Ghebhard's most private apartment. It is unknown to him even ; but I was not as many hours in these quarters as I have since been days, when I discovered it, and I have since, you may well believe, turned it to good account."

"I am satisfied you have — but now let us quickly retire — I want no further demonstration of the success of your efforts — come, come!"

"Hush! hark! yes, there they are in full conclave — The brothers, Nuenar, the old heretic Spangenberg, all ready for the solemnisation of the marriage, if not in the very ceremony. Hist, your highness! would it not be exquisite to listen to your rival pronouncing, as it were, the very sentence of his ruin and your triumph? Let's hearken a moment in this passage — there is time enough for retreat without discovery — all are too much occupied and too full of their false security to cross our path. Go on, go on a little more," continued Scotus, as the bishop, unable to resist his curiosity and afraid of appearing to fear, entered the cavity, "there is no obstacle to your advance. But be cautious, make no noise — scarcely breathe — every sound is audible through the partition."

"I hear nothing," whispered the bishop.

"They have ceased speaking for a moment — go closer to the wall," said Scotus; and as the former followed his directions, he withdrew briskly from the little passage, closed the door, turned the key, and took it from the lock, leaving the imprisoned prelate to ruminate at his leisure on the near connection between caution and cunning, and the risk which is run, by the nervous dread of seeming afraid leading to acts of manifest temerity.

Scotus paused for a moment in the middle of the chamber, and surveyed hastily the quantity of various property scattered about.

"Rich garments, valuable books, instruments of price," said he, "it does grieve me to leave any of ye behind! Even at this moment of immense wealth, the avaricious stir of nature is in my heart for the merest trifle I possess. But am I one of those who would risk a great possession for a greedy passion? No, I am grown wiser than nature made me, otherwise I had lived for nought. Am I not a great man? Two powerful prelates, princes, potentates, my dupes in one short night! Is not the power of knowledge and the knowledge of power a glorious possession? Adieu, magnanimous rivals! I leave ye both in your common palace — to one a prison, to the other a paradise — and little, oh how little! do I care

whether fate turns it, for either or for both, into a heaven or a hell ! ”

His soliloquy over, he stole gently from his apartment, left the doors open, passed through the garden, and soon overtook Imogen, who waited at an appointed place with the fleet and high-spirited horses. Scotus mounted on one of them, and with his companion close by his side, he quickly passed through the city gates, being provided with a certificate of surety, a passport, and all papers necessary for his comings and goings to and fro between the electoral city and the territory of Liege, towards which direction he was far on his route before the sun had risen above the earth's visible edge.

CHAPTER XXI.

AND scarcely had the day-god rushed up impetuously from the horizon, when the whole face of earth and heaven became changed. Rolling clouds followed fast, and enviously obscured the sun-beams. Torrents of rain poured down. The wind shook to their very roots the young-leaved trees, and lashed the waters of the Rhine into the semblance of a mimic sea. A flood swept through each separate street of the city, and sheets of water fell from the projecting roofs and angular gables of every house. Yet the drenched citizens were up and out in thousands. They had a double vengeance to exercise on this most inauspicious day ; for both religious and political fanaticism worked fiercely in their hearts.

The *fête* of St. Urbain, the patron of vine-growers and wine-drinkers, had been affected by the caprices of the season, in a very peculiar manner throughout Germany from time immemorial. No bishop or martyr was ever canonized under such contingencies. St. Swithin himself, the very arbiter of the weatherglass, the ever-changing distributor of shower and sunshine, possessed immunities which were refused to the innocent and ill-treated Urbain. No matter if hail, rain, snow, or a combination of all defaced the anniversary of the former, his faithful followers do him equal honour as though he had benignantly shut up his sluices and poured enjoyment instead

of misery upon the nether world. But if on the birthday of the latter, who was never imagined to possess the slightest control over the elements, the weather proved unpropitious to his pleasure-seeking votaries, there was no manner of indignity which they did not heap upon him, his effigies, his relics, and his memory. For four-and-twenty hours together he was completely unsainted and decanonized, and a long twelvemonth of veneration cancelled the sacrilege of a day. It was a curious custom ; a grotesquely practical satire on the monstrosity of saints'-worship. It is wonderful that such a principle could live through the anomaly of such a practice. But the church of Rome owed its great strength to the greater weakness of human nature ; and it played the conscience and superstitions of its adherents, with a long, a loose, but a scarcely-to-be-broken line.

The desperate weather which ushered in the morning would perhaps have proved a check to the long-planned revolt, had it not been that the pent-up impiety of the populace was glad to find a double vent on this occasion ; and it turned out that the day was well fixed on by the corporation conspirators. No sooner, therefore, were the citizens informed by the authorities that they were at liberty to pursue their usual career of outrage, than the flood-gates of popular fury were let loose, and at a preconcerted signal the demonstrations of hostility against the insulted saint were in a moment turned into deeds of violence against the denounced sovereign. The wooden statue of poor Urbain, which stood in the market-place, was quickly covered with showers of mud, and ere long hurled from its pedestal and dragged through the abounding puddles of that, even now, dirtiest town in Europe. And be it remembered that the filthy water of Cologne at that epoch was not neutralised as now by the *eau* of more modern invention. No Farina existed then, to redeem the noxious celebrity of his native place ; and the impurities of thousands of monks and mendicants aided to give any odours but those of sanctity to the defaced and draggled effigy.

And it was before the irreverent rage of the congregated mass of rioters was sated, yet just as it had reached the point of readiness for some new object, that the skilful revolutionists intermixed the cry of "Down with the elector !" with the vociferated execrations poured out on all sides against the

saint. In an instant the tide of rabble excitement rushed fiercely into this new channel. The image of Urbain was abandoned to its filthy fate. Its vulgar assailants, in every sense profane, had now found a higher object of attack, and they tumultuously rushed in broken groups towards every quarter of the city, where any statues, busts, or insignia of Ghebbard Truchses were to be found. These they dragged along the various streets, and, after mutilating them in every possible form of indignity and indecency, they either spurned them out of the city gates, or dashed them into the waves of the angry river, and they shouted with frantic joy as each fragment was whirled within the foaming eddies.

One party, more furious than the rest, and hurried away by their hatred against the individual so far as to confound him with the office he filled, burst into the cathedral, and, seizing the archbishop's sceptre, or baculus, from the place where it had been suspended for a long series of years among other consecrated objects, soon shivered it to pieces in the public street, in the presence and amidst the loud plaudits of thousands, who quickly commenced a scramble in the accumulated mud for the rich gold-work and the precious stones that had ornamented the sacred bauble, and which were now scattered among the crowd. The taste for pillage thus given, there is no knowing how far it might have been carried, or if it had even stopped with the plunder of the holy temple itself, had not the magistrates and city officers, with the members of the council, and even the solemn syndic, appeared at this critical juncture, and, by the force of sundry harangues and inflammatory appeals to the prejudices of the mob, so far mastered their passions as to turn them from the objects they wished to save against those they hoped to destroy. The electoral palace was consequently the point towards which the pillagers next moved.

The first stragglers, on arriving before the principal gates, were surprised to find them wide open and unguarded; and others who went round to the rear observed similar proofs that the building was totally abandoned. Such was indeed the fact; and the rebel magistracy with their followers found, consequently, no obstacle to the fierce rush which was instantly made into the court-yard, halls, corridors, and thence into the most secret chambers. The work of destruction soon commenced and was speedily over. It must be witnessed to be believed in

what an incredibly short space of time an extensive mansion may be sacked and gutted from garret to cellar. In the case we describe no time was lost ; nothing was spared. The ancient but costly furniture, pictures, books, ornaments, and utensils of all kinds were shattered in the various apartments, or dashed down from the windows or balconies into the street. The fragments of shivered glass shone for months among the pavement in glittering testimony of the devastation, long after the minutest splinters of wood work had crumbled or been blown away, and while the winds whistled through the doorless and windowless shell of desolation that looked like a ruin many ages old.

The spoils of the palace, variously applied, soon gave an air of wild and fantastic picturesqueness to the pillagers. The tapestries and the costly curtains of silk or velvet, deeply fringed with gold or silver lace, were torn into shreds and affixed to poles and carried as flags waving over the heads of their bearers, or turned into scarfs, sashes, or imperfect mantles to decorate their bodies. Dresses of every description, from those of the prince-prelate and his richly-attired guest Count Scotus down to the simplest menials of the household, were instantly appropriated by the first comers. Pieces of armour, helmets, and warlike instruments were donned and wielded in most incongruous ways. And thus equipped and decorated, half-drunk with the produce of the well-stored cellars, and ripe for every excess, the destroyers next proceeded to the houses of Kriechlingen and the other Protestant members of the chapter, and at each of these the same scene was repeated, with slight variations of violence. In none of those obnoxious mansions, however, were any human victims found on which the mob might wreak their fury. There never was a more bloodless revolution effected, for early in the morning it was announced that the elector and his suite, with the families of Kriechlingen and the others of those who adhered to his cause, had all effected their escape towards Bonn, the capital of the electorate. And the gate leading to that city being in possession of the troops under the command of Von Heyen, to whom were joined some of the Liegnitz reitres, the people, sure of their triumph, did not attempt any collision with the united regular and irregular force, which after a short delay followed the distinguished runaways, whose retreat it was their duty to

protect, showing a good countenance against the mob, who felt no inclination to push their conquests beyond the city walls.

As long as the electoral troops were in sight, the memory of Von Heyen's conduct a few weeks before, and the reputation of the reitres acting as assistant checks, the ardour of the revolted population was considerably tempered by alarm. Their worshipful honours of the town council, baffled in the hope of seizing the elector and his partisans, terrified at the very absence of resistance, which seemed to speak some deep design or after-plot, and above all things marvelling at the disappearance of their beloved Bishop of Liege, were tossed to and fro in a tumult of doubt and fear. To the timid there is no evil so great as the vague apprehension of treachery. The brave man holds it in especial scorn. However he may be alive to a sense of other dangers — even when he rushes to meet them — *that* he rarely dreams of, and never dreads. But our palpitating friends of the corporation were not of the latter class ; and it was only on receiving a report of the actual retreat of Von Heyen and his force that the self-formed provisional government put forth all the insolence of brief authority.

A formal proclamation of Ghebhard Truchses' dethronement, and of Ernest's election, was the first act of the citizens and of the churchmen whom they associated with them in the government. The various representatives of the emperor, the pope, and the other potentates, were invited to sanction these proceedings ; and the rest of the electorate was strongly urged, in ready-printed addresses, to join in the movement. Order was soon in a great degree restored. The burghers, when they saw that there was no chance of a conflict, assembled in great numbers for the formation of a civic guard ; the rioters, worn out by fatigue, drenched with rain, and overpowered by wine, retired to their hovels for repose, or found it on the pavement or in the channels, where they sunk down in promiscuous heaps. In this state, the various weapons which they had plundered from the palace and elsewhere were quietly taken from the relaxing grasp of some, or purchased from the more tenacious few at low prices. Several who resisted the summons of the authorities were put into prison. Others scattered voluntarily into the country ; and thus, in four-and-twenty hours, the city was at least secure against any abuse of the liberty it had at so little risk acquired.

But during the whole of this period anxiety and apprehension on the subject of the missing Bishop of Liege absorbed every other feeling ; and while the revolted citizens dared not take a step in advance of what the first hour of success had urged them to, the wily diplomatists of the congress hung back from any decided measure of approbation as to what had been already done. Serious misgivings were the consequence to the compromised members of the corporation. Many a shivering fit of moral ague was followed by the fever-flush of terror at imagined pains and penalties ; and the most valorous among the burgher conservatives found their draught of triumph as bitter as though it had been literally distilled from their laurels. An end was, however, put to this suspense by the chance discovery of the bishop in his closet-prison. An unsated pillager had returned to the ruined palace on the morning following the riot, in hopes of finding in some nook or cranny wherewithal to reward his avaricious perseverance ; and he succeeded far beyond his hopes or deserts : for, in groping against the wall of the apartment so lately occupied by Scotus, he touched, by chance, the spring-lock which fastened the newly-proclaimed elector in the very heart of his usurped possession. Great was the delight on either side when the liberator and the delivered knew the real state of things. The incarcerated bishop was, however, nearly exhausted by his long confinement and his cramped position. Not having heard the slightest buzz or hum in the direction of what Scotus had assured him was the private chamber of Ghebhard Truchses (as well he might not ; considering that the partition-wall was full three feet thick), his faculty of overcaution prevented him from venturing the slightest sound that might betray him to the ears which, he doubted not, were on the alert for any symptom of his near neighbourhood. When the pillage of the palace commenced, his organ of "caution" had become suddenly developed many fold ; and even when the stillness of abandonment set in, and the common sensation of nature told him that night had succeeded to day, and that day was again treading on the footsteps of night, he defied all the urgency of sleep, hunger, and thirst, and remained stiff and half-starved, without uttering a cry or striking a blow that might by possibility have attracted the attention of some passer-by. And he would, in all probability, but for his

chance release, have ended by sinking dead in his cell sooner than brave the peril of a call for relief. And of such stuff are made your over-prudent men, all unfit, it will be at least allowed, to guide, even if they be qualified at all to mix in, the great movements of political life.

We must pass over the rejoicings of the bishop and his newly-acquired subjects at this miraculous release, as well as the vigorous measures which he immediately adopted in his several relations with the corporation and the congress, and the secret glee with which he chuckled over the thought that Scotus was by that time in close durance at Liege, and within reach of the ample measure of retribution due to his double treachery. And now we turn our attention to persons and events of more interest.

It needs hardly to be stated that Von Sweinishen was the source from which the elector learned the dangers that beset him and his friends, and by whose timely warning he and they were enabled to escape from it. The rough but cunning adventurer having apparently entered into all the proposals of Scotus, accepted all his bribes, and, on his return to the town-council, made a commutation of his demands in consideration of prompt payment, hastened with his master to communicate everything that passed to Ghebhard Truchses.

The state of mind of Ghebhard, from the moment of his recovered recollection after the shock of amaze and rapture on seeing what he believed to be the magical representation of his heart's idol in the mirror, must be left to the reader's fancy. To depict it in broad and deep detail is beyond the writer's hopes; and a skeleton sketch of such an intense combination of feeling and thought would be unworthy of our hero, and of his history. How, in fact, describe, or how account for, the mental miracle of a man's bounding at once from inebriate unconsciousness into the full enjoyment of reason, and at the same time sinking into entire forgetfulness of what passed during his temporary loss of it? How analyse that confused buzzing of the brain, which tells us vaguely what we said, and heard, and saw, and thought, when wine was just beginning to gain the mastery, and ere the nobler faculties of the mind became entirely swamped in its excess? or the rush of blood, the wild pulse-throbs, the heart riot, under the false influence of which a mortal feels himself a god, while he is, in fact, no

better than a brute? the burst of returning consciousness, the pang of regret, the blush of shame, the deep-breathed vow — so often made, so seldom kept — of future moderation? And if to these general features of a too common case be added the peculiar sensation likely to arise in a mind of haughty sensitiveness, far in advance of the gross excesses of that age yet in full sympathy with its impassioned energy, materials will not be wanting for the speculative reader, who would picture Ghebbhard Truchses in the most critical morning of his life.

And when, led in by Scotus, and by him prepared for the scene, he saw assembled together Agnes, her brothers, and her friend Duchess Anne, all unanimous in consenting to, and the three latter eager for, the completion of that marriage which the elector now urged with such seductive ardour, when, not inquiring how this group was formed or brought so strangely into his palace, he only saw it as the condensed personification of feelings of which Agnes was the heart; when, forgetting the struggle which had for awhile so racked him, he was resolved to sacrifice all interests, and brave all hostility, for the possession of the bliss which Providence seemed to have provided and secured for him; then it was that he presented a living model which bids defiance to aught but imagination's boundless skill.

No sooner was Ghebbhard convinced of the reality of his own sensations, and satisfied that he did not breathe in a mist of magical delusion, and all around him proving the fact that his passion for Agnes now only waited the words which were to make its solemnisation legal, as its existence was already holy, than he sent prompt messengers to summon Nuenar, Kriechlingen, and the other leaders among the protestant members of the chapter, to witness the ceremony, to the immediate performance of which Agnes could not refuse the so much urged consent; and, in accordance with her strong-felt wish, as well as to gratify the family-feeling of her brothers, old Cyriacus Spangenberg was chosen as the officiating clergyman, and sent for, for the purpose. It was just when matters had reached this point that Scotus disappeared, and hastened to his rendezvous with the Bishop of Liege, afterwards to accompany him to the secret council already described. And scarcely had the elector's friends assembled in obedience to his invitation, and before the marriage ceremony could begin, when Prince Henry

of Liegnitz and Von Sweinishen demanded instant admission to Truchses' presence, and revealed to him his imminent peril from the plot on the point of bursting out.

Not a moment was to be lost. Immediate action followed on the conviction of its necessity. Truchses again on this occasion gave proof of that inestimable talent which enables a man to place under control his most intense sensations, when their indulgence would clash with matters of equal moment, but of a widely distinct nature. Orders and preparations for departure, a quick perception of the measures to be taken, of what was required for safety and of what would be superfluous, and of the things to be carried away and the encumbrances to be left behind, and, finally, an instant adaptation of tone and manner to every individual involved in the exigency—encouragement here, repression there, inspiring words and looks to one, a soothing sentence or stimulating phrase to another—all well-timed and fitly applied, and all establishing our hero as a practical man of business, without being which the finest attributes of genius are of small account to those who fill the leading parts in a political drama.

During the whole of this bustling scene our hero's double character was admirably preserved. The sovereign was brought out in full relief; the lover was in abeyance. But the prominent action of the first did not overwhelm the by-play of the latter. A look, a gesture, a passing word, told Agnes that she was the inspiration of all the rest. Had anything been required to confirm her attachment, the events of that hour had done it, for nothing so cements a woman's affection as her pride in the talents and energy of its object. A gentle, tame, insidious suitor may steal into a female heart, but it is a firm and vigorous one who can alone keep possession of a woman's mind.

Ere the revolt broke out, the refugees were half-way on the road to Bonn; and in due time, and without any accident or hindrance, they were at the gates of that capital of the electorate and chief residence of the sovereign.

CHAPTER XXII.

GREAT was the astonishment and regret of Ghebbhard Truchses, as he arrived within gunshot of his capital, to find that, instead of widely-opened portals, raised drawbridges, and shouting thousands, rejoicing in his safe return, nothing was seen but closed barriers, threatening cannon, and a display of civil and military authority, arrayed for parley and discussion. Whether it was that the intrigues of Ernest of Bavaria, and his supporter, were successful, or that the apprehension excited in the magistrates and city senate of Bonn, on this sudden and dubious return of their sovereign, with a large body of armed men under the chief command of so notorious an adventurer as Heury of Liegnitz, history does not precisely specify. But the whole of these circumstances proves beyond a doubt, that, let the brilliant or the generous qualities of Truchses have been ever so effective with his intimate associates, or the poorer objects of his bounty, he excited only envy, jealousy, and probably hatred, among the leading personages in his two principal cities.

The summons of the officer in command of the body-guard, and in advance of the carriages, that free entrance should be given to his highness the elector into his own capital, was, after considerable parley with Dr. Eccias, the mayor, who was sent for in all haste, answered by a respectful but peremptory request for information as to the number of troops (and the nature of their service) by whom his highness was so unwontedly escorted. The reply of Truchses was a haughty refusal to enter into any details, and a reiterated order, that the gates should be instantly thrown open, and the keys sent to him for his future safe-keeping. A long time elapsed before any rejoinder came to this demand; but at length a formal writing, signed and sealed by Dr. Eccias in the name of the senate, and embodying the spirit of the former verbal message, was handed to the elector, who had alighted from his carriage with Agnes, the duchess, Freda, Emma, their mother, and the male members of his immediate party, and taken refuge in a large house of public entertainment, but one most unsuitable

for the reception of such a company. The elector's mortification and resentment may be well conceived at this dishonouring sequel to the disgraceful necessity of his flight from Cologne. Had such events occurred some weeks before, there would have been no bounds to his anger, and he would, at all hazards, have rushed into measures of violent revenge. But, under the new influence which possessed him, the heat of his character was tempered down into warmth, and its irritability into firmness. He glowed, but did not burn ;—he was bold, but not rash. His vanity was deeply hurt at appearing to Agnes in the present aspect of defied and shorn authority ; but his pride urged him to show her that he was invested with the before unfelt capacity of braving and battling with reverse, now felt for the first time.

It was thus that love formed the foundation of the new character which began to meet those new circumstances under which he had most probably been confounded and crushed, had not that sublimely regenerating passion taken possession of his soul.

While the elector, with much self-command, perused the written conditions on which the senate insisted before they could suffer him to enter the city, the arrival of Captain Von Heyen with the rear guards was reported to him.

"Von Heyen! yes—he is the man for this crisis," said Truchses, "let him attend, and instantly!" And as the captain entered in prompt obedience to the call, he continued,—"You have no doubt heard of what has passed? Well (as Von Heyen bowed affirmatively), read this, and tell me what answer you think it deserves."

The young soldier glanced at the paper, and clapped his hand on his sword-hilt.

"Good! The reply I looked for," said Truchses—"Go, then, Von Heyen, to those refractory senators, and bring them to reason. You bear my full warrant on your finger joint—they know the signet ring, and will not doubt the wearer's authority."

Von Heyen paused, as if requiring some more ample instructions.

"What do you wait for?" asked Truchses.

"To learn the direct purpose of your highness's wishes."

"To have the city-gates immediately opened, and the chief

magistrate in person to wait on me here. Is that enough? Do you comprehend me fully?"

"I do, your highness — and I promise you that the mayor shall be here within half an hour, or my corpse be stretched in the senate-house."

The intrepid messenger found no obstruction on his way into the city, being accompanied from the gates by the two magistrates who bore the proposition of the senate, and who recognised, as ample credentials, the ring which Von Heyen indignantly thrust up before them. He was within a few minutes in the hall where the sapient body was assembled. Rich tapestry hung from the walls of this chamber, and the decorations were all in keeping. The learned chief magistrate, and two associate burgomasters, in white and scarlet mantles, with the town commander, in military costume, occupied seats on a platform three or four feet above the floor, where a dozen or more of the civic council, in black robes, were placed round a table covered with papers; and twenty-four halberdiers stood at some distance at either side. On the approach of Von Heyen, formally announced and ushered in as the elector's messenger, the mayor and burgomaster descended two steps from their place of dignity, to do honour to this representative of the sovereign. They then returned to their seats; a chair was offered to Von Heyen, of which, however, he did not avail himself; and at a signal the guards retired with the military commandant.

"Now, sir captain, we are now ready to hear the gracious message of our sovereign lord, his highness the elector-archbishop," said Eccias, in grave and pedantic tones.

"That, master mayor, is a very short and pithy one. His highness orders you to give me the keys of the Cologne gate, and to follow me instantly to his august presence, in the faubourg, where he is now detained by the insolent refusal for his admission into the city."

At these rude words, and the uncompromising air of the speaker, the worshipful senators looked very ill at ease, and every eye was turned towards the short spare figure and pinched features of the chief magistrate, the representative of their rights and dignity. He met this silent and simultaneous appeal with due decorum; and, after listening to a few hurried observations in either ear from his colleagues

who sat beside him, he hummed and hawed, and folded his robes gracefully, and, with the air and emphasis of a lecturing professor, he began a reply to the impatient messenger, pointing to the table as he spoke.

"Sir captain, there lies the charter of our city rights, beside it the keys of our gates, and I am the representative of the one — the guardian of the other ——"

"Good!" cried Von Heyen, interrupting the oration, and sadly discomposing the orator and the audience, not only by the loudness of his voice, but by the accompanying sound occasioned by his fiercely striking the point of his rapier's scabbard against the floor.

"Never, therefore, can I compromise those rights, or suffer the sacred trust reposed in me to be violated. I am bound in honour and in duty to refuse his highness's demand, until his escort is reduced to the true constitutional standard of his accustomed body-guard; — and consequently, in the name ——"

While Eccias spoke, Von Heyen eyed attentively the many ponderous keys ranged on the table, and to each of which was appended a label with the name of the particular gate engraved on it. He fixed on one bearing the word Cologne, and (ere the chief magistrate could finish the phrase so pompously commenced) he made a rapid stride from where he stood, and, having first hooked up his rapier close to his bayderole, he snatched up the key and stuck it into his belt, from which at the same moment he drew forth a long poniard; and then springing on the platform, he grasped the astonished mayor by his mantle close to the throat, and, with the vigour of youth and resolution, he dragged him down upon the floor.

A prodigious tumult arose from this daring act. The burgomasters and senators bounded from their seats, exclaimed loudly, cried out lustily for the guard, ran in every direction about the room, jostling each other, and tripping up their own heels in their robes of state. But not one attempted to interpose between the desperate violator of senatorial dignity, and the half-strangled prisoner, whom he whisked away towards the door. The halberdiers, however, rushed in, and a dozen blades were in as many seconds ready to immolate the offender, had he not placed his back against the door which some of the party succeeded in locking; and then, in a voice

which outroared the exclamations of the rest, fixing at the same time his poniard at his prisoner's breast, he swore that the moment of his death should be also that of the mayor. He at the same time adroitly loosened without weakening his grasp, so as to permit the terrified magistrate to plead his own cause with his friends and guardians. Relieved from the dread of strangulation, he lost not a moment in making use of his recovered breath, and he pitifully implored the halberdiers to ground their arms, nor venture to do a mischief to the honourable officer, his highness's confidential messenger — the point of whose blade was still within a hair's breadth of his panting bosom, and whose eye looked daggers to the full as threatening. A burst of attempted explanation, confusion of voices, propositions, menaces, entreaties, all fell together on the unmoved Von Heyen, who declared, briefly but decidedly, again and again, that he would never let go his possession of the key, or his hold on the mayor, till he led the one into the presence, and laid the other at the feet, of the elector. Further struggling or arguing was evidently in vain, and the most earnest abettor of the sturdy soldier's decision was the captured functionary, who would have made any terms to put an end to his fearful situation.

And so the affair was arranged, according to Von Heyen's peremptory conditions. He, still holding fast Doctor Eccias (who was preceded by his colleagues in the magistracy, Rudolf Krantz and Jacob Schlaun) marched forthwith out from the senate-house towards the unworthy quarters where the elector was waiting, unattended by any guard, and offering to the gaze of the agitated citizens who crowded the streets, a spectacle which none could by any means comprehend. No sooner had the group reached the gates than Eccias, under his captor's directions, gave orders that the elector's advanced guard should be immediately invited to enter, and take possession of the post. This was with alacrity performed by Von Sweinishen and his reitres; while Von Heyen lost no time in conducting the magistrate into the elector's presence. Once there, he let loose the somewhat re-assured mayor, and at the same instant he deposed the ponderous key on the table before which his sovereign was seated, and he then, with a respectful bow, retired.

Doctor Eccias forthwith attempted to stammer out an oration,

full of explanation and apology, slightly tinged with remonstrance, but rendered almost unintelligible from the speaker's nervous tribulation. Truchses, however, soon set him and his companions at ease, by assurances of his perfect confidence in their fidelity and respect, and of his conviction that the strange and suspicious measures of precaution which so astonished, and at first offended him, had proceeded solely from the senate having mistaken himself and his troops for enemies. He thereupon held out his hand to the trio, who one and all embraced it with professions of the most profound attachment, and they soon hastened off to communicate the result of their forced audience to their fellow-citizens, and to prepare for the mid-day dinner at the palace, to which the elector had given them a most gracious invitation. Truchses, on their departure, summoned Von Heyen to appear, and, after hearing his recital of the scene in the senate-house, at which he laughed heartily, he told him, in the presence of his other adherents, that he was from that hour advanced another grade in the army, and that, in honour of his conduct, he was also nominated to a situation in the household, so that he should henceforward bear the title of chamberlain and wear the key, his badge of office, as one the best suited to commemorate the service he had that day performed.

In a little more the elector with his party made a triumphal procession through the city to the palace; and he was there received by his brother Charles Truchses, who had most opportunely arrived at the same time at Bonn by another entrance, with a reinforcement of a thousand men, which, added to Ghebbard's troops, formed a body quite sufficient to overcome any disaffection to be apprehended from the senate or the citizens. The strongest measures of precaution were immediately adopted. All the military posts were doubled; the Liegnitz reitres were placed in a barrack close to the senate-house, and ready to act, on the shortest notice, and in the most vigorous manner which might be required, against that sacred building and its suspected occupants. Prince Henry despatched some of his captains to gather up in all haste his scattered levies; and a considerable increase was made to the usual guard attached to the elector's person, the whole being placed under the immediate command of Major Von Heyen. By these means the burgher discontent was completely held in check; the

hostility of the senate and the magistrates confined to secret plots and murmured menaces ; while both court and city, sovereign and subjects, assumed towards each other an air of most hypocritical suavity and reciprocal confidence.

To the numerous applications for audiences which poured in at the palace from ministers, magistrates, military officers, private individuals — all, in fact, who in this crisis felt or assumed to feel their allegiance particularly excited — one unvarying form of refusal was returned, for a full hour after the arrival of the elector and his friends. During this period, long and important when the urgent circumstances of the case are considered, Ghebbard Truchses was employed in an affair of the utmost moment to himself and others. What it was, the sagacity of the reader may perhaps divine ; but as it was a profound secret for the rest of the world, we must not for the present raise the veil which covered the transaction.

At the dinner table that day, the three magistrates, who came punctually in obedience to the elector's invitation, were dazzled by a display of female beauty and elegance rarely approached, and certainly never surpassed, even by the frequent combinations of loveliness which this most amorous and gallant sovereign was so proud to entertain and so assiduous in collecting. At his left hand sat Agnes de Mansfelt, at his right the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg ; and much did the guests marvel that though the place of highest honour was occupied by the latter princess, still an equal share of reverential etiquette seemed conceded to her less elevated friend and rival in beauty ; while the dignified courtesy which the prince-prelate offered to the one, bore no comparison to the warmth, the softness, the intense yet tempered devotion which in looks, words, and gestures he lavished on the other. And Agnes, on her part, seemed to wear the honours which were thus accorded to her with an undefinable mixture of modest reserve and triumphant tenderness. Pride did not flash from her eye, nor did self-importance curl her lips or agitate her frame. She sat with a careless grace ; and a look of abstraction seemed at times to say that her glances were rather turned inwards to the examination of her own sensations than fixed on external objects. A sudden blush occasionally covered her face, and threw a richer glow of beauty into its whole expression ; then again the blood forsook the cheeks and brow, as though a heart-

faintness had summoned it back, to give new strength to the organ of life and all its subtle movements. The natural dignity of her character was sure to adapt itself to all circumstances and occasions. There was therefore no awkwardness manifest to impair the effect of her charms; which was rather heightened than weakened — particularly to those initiated into the forenoon's secret — by the embarrassment arising from the efforts of a strong mind and sensitive heart, to restrain the pride and moderate the timidity which struggled within her.

Ghebbard Truchses bore himself like a conqueror sure of his triumph; the flush of victory on his brow, its throb within his breast; but his mind full of the great necessity of holding in check every thought which might betray the voluptuous weakness he revelled and rejoiced in. Nor could any living eye detect in him a fear, a doubt, or an uneasiness, notwithstanding the critical and most hazardous aspect of his affairs.

The repast finished, the elector and the ladies rose from table and the party retired to the withdrawing rooms, Duchess Anne leaning on her princely entertainer's right arm, Agnes on his left — and well was she satisfied that *it* was the place of honour, while she felt his heroic heart throbbing against the hand which the nervous pressure of his arm held close but softly to his breast. The afternoon was variously occupied; but Truchses, who had most variety and most occupations, thought it never-ending. At length, leaving the ladies and some of the less important and least elevated in rank of his male guests to themselves, the elector passed through several saloons and ante-rooms to his state closet, followed at his desire by sundry functionaries, his friends Nuenar and Kriechlingen, and the three city magistrates whose presence formed so important a feature in the day's proceedings. Truchses had not failed to perceive the effect produced on the last-mentioned individuals by the lofty confidence of his manner, which, though not put on for a purpose, he was not unwilling to profit by to the utmost. He, therefore, as soon as they were seated at the council tables, entered at once on the subject of the conference, by proposing, in a blended tone of insinuation and authority, that the keys of the several city gates should be forthwith brought to the palace and delivered into his keeping, as a

measure of security, and also as a matter of right which he now saw occasion to insist on.

The magistrates, taken as the elector wished by surprise, still under the influence of his imposing manners, his condescensions, and all the dangers of courtly temptations, were very nearly caught in the trap so daintily baited. The first in rank, Dr. Eccias, a man of refined and cultivated tastes, and moreover of delicate nerves, a religious sceptic, and not over-rigid moralist, with the rude lesson of the morning still in his heart, and the honied flavour of the afternoon blandishments floating in his brain, was on the point of at once acceding to the abrupt demand. Krantz, the next in station, a man of subservient character and little firmness, was ready to approve whatever concession his learned colleague might make. But Jacob Schlaun, a sworn friend and constant companion of Hilpaert of Cologne, was of a different stamp. Sturdy and bold, a bigot in faith, a despiser of rank, he felt only for the city's privileges, the danger of heresy, and the pride of standing as a bulwark for the one and against the other. No sooner, therefore, did his quick grey eye catch the wavering expression of Eccias's glance, and the smile so expressive of yielding on the face of Krantz, than he started up, and said with stentorian voice,

"No, I say no, to your highness's proposal. And I speak out of my regular order to give time for thought to those who should precede me. My head is not turned by the fumes of court flattery, nor my tenderness touched by your highness's distress. I tell you boldly, elector and archbishop as I own you to be, that I, burgess and burgomaster, will never consent—and without unanimity on all points of local administration every decision is null—to give the keys of our city into the keeping of any sovereign, and least of all to one whose military force is out of proportion with the security of our rights, and whose ankerling after heresy forebodes destruction to our religion. I have said my say. I will stand by my resolution to the death. And now, with your highness's good permission, I take my leave."

So saying he moved away, throwing a parting look of reproach on his colleagues and of defiance on all the rest. No one attempted to oppose the departure of the bold citizen, but every eye was fixed on the elector. A quick but tremendous struggle

was evident, between his naturally impetuous temper and the provisional calmness which pervaded it ever since the commencement of his passion for Agnes. But the inscrutable workings of the human heart had on this particular day completed a new phase in our hero's feelings, and a single circumstance had thrown him back in a great measure on the old elements of his natural character so long in abeyance. A few hours previously such an incident as this would have passed by without power to stir up his boiling energy. But now — the reader must analyse the cause, we only relate the effect — the long-suppressed violence of his nature burst forth, as, with an expression of countenance that struck terror into all around him, and in accents whose fierce utterance made the retreating burgomaster bound back on his path, he cried,

“ Stop! Dare not, at your peril, quit my presence without my commands! Audacious dog, is it thus and by *thee* I may be braved? Miscreant, beware how you miscalculate on my forbearance and your own meanness. What, in my very palace, in my council-room, in presence of my noble friends, under the very ægis of my sovereign escutcheon, to be defied! and by a worm like thee! By Heavens! —”

The burst of passion was checked, not only by that prompt feeling of one's own dignity which comes, lightning-like, in the very height of such a crisis, but by the sight of the pale, stern look of the bold burgher, who had turned and stood fixed during the tirade.

“ What say you to my proposal, to my demand — good sirs?” asked Truchses, abruptly addressing Eccias and Krantz.

“ Whatever suits your highness's pleasure,” stammered forth the former; and the other echoed every word with gestures of profound submission.

“ You hear this, citizen Schlaun,” said Truchses; “ now speak your decision — I give you fair play and ample time for reflection — yes, or no?”

“ No!” exclaimed the undaunted burgher, folding his arms across his breast as though he worked himself up to his worst fate.

“ No!” cried the elector, springing from his seat and drawing his sword. “ No! Demons of hell, is this to be borne! By the sacred host of heaven, your head shall pay.

for this before morning!" And, as he uttered this hasty oath, and pronounced the unjust sentence, he struck the table before him with the flat of his rapier, with such force that the vibration loosened three of the four lions that stood out in half-relief from the blazoned escutcheon of his family arms, that hung against the wall directly before him; and the gilded emblems fell rattling together on the floor. Truchses started, and gazed on the blank left in the framework before him.

"So may the tyrant fall and crumble!" muttered Schlaun.

"Away with him!" said Truchses, in a hollow and imperfect tone. Schlaun was instantly seized, and removed from the chamber by some of the angry witnesses of the scene. The elector waved his hand, in token of his wish to be left alone. He was promptly obeyed; but when all the rest retired, silently, as if by stealth, he caught Nuenar by the arm, and closed the door.

"Adolphus," said he, solemnly, looking full upon his friend, who read in his pale cheeks, fixed eyes, and compressed lips the workings of superstition on his powerful and enthusiastic mind—"this is conclusive of my fate, and thou, my best friend, art its fitting witness. I began my political life with an omen—it will close under the influence of another. The warning strikes upon my heart, and shoots its sting upwards to my brain. I feel my destiny from this moment—but I fear it not. How true an emblem of my mind was that shattered escutcheon! The four lion attributes that formed my character were there justly figured out—ambition, pride, energy, and courage. The three first are, at once, and as by a stroke of magic, swept from my mind's tablet,—the last alone remains. That clings to me, and clutches still,—death only may shake it off! But for the rest, they are gone, gone for ever,—yet in their stead is no blank left. No, Nuenar, inspiring and immortal love has taken the vacant place, or rather forced them from their usurped position, for it was ever inherent in my heart; but never, oh, never till now throned rightly in my spirit. The forenamed passions kept the soil employed, enriched it too, mayhap, for the prompt growth of that all-fragrant flower of love which blooms there now. I mourn not for the fate that waits me. Rich, happy, and content in the one great blessing

now secured to me, I throw behind me the grandeur and the pomp of life without a sigh. From this hour forth I hold them in utter scorn, I live alone for love and *her*. But are they not the same? Is not she the passion's true personification? Is not it but the moral emblem of her perfection? Oh, Nuenar, how serious and how solemn is my happiness this moment! Now only do I feel worthy of what awaits me. All the vulgar dross of my nature seems by enchantment sifted and scattered forth. The bright pure ore alone exists, a fitting offering for the shrine I go to worship at. Speak not to me, good Nuenar. If I am deceived by fancy's colouring leave me in my delusion. Let what I feel be truth, reality, existence—for this night at least—nor do I seek or hope for a morrow that would bring me other or better wisdom. Now, Nuenar, farewell! Let no one see or seek me. I go hence by the private way to——Leave me, leave me, my friend! There are feelings, weaknesses if thou wilt, which not even such an one as thou must see. But hold—I must not stain this heaven-like day by any act of wrong. Let that foolhardy but honest burgher be released; and leave those poor magistrates in possession of their paltry keys. He is pardoned and doubly so, for his stubborn virtue first, then that he was the means of yon strange accident which brought me to this thorough knowledge of myself, this perfect purification of heart and mind and soul. God bless you, Adolphus! To-morrow—but *it* will come of itself—too soon—too soon! Then let me not, even in thought, bound over the brief eternity of my bliss!"

Nuenar replied not, and Truchses was in a moment afterwards alone. Evening had now set in. He watched the sunset with such anxious yet solemn interest as the placid death-scene of a saint might inspire in a true believer. He saw a sure heaven of happiness beyond. He listened intensely, as each succeeding chime announced that old Time grew older—an age he thought in every minute! But in a few long-coming and long-passing hours he was no more in solitude. And *then* the concentrated powers of his whole being had found an object.

CHAPTER XXIII.

On the evening following the day of those transactions, a party of students of the university were taking their promenade on the public walk by the river's side. Among them was Ulrick Von Leckenstein. The events which had signalised the festival of St. Urbain were already known, publicly but imperfectly, at Bonn, for correct and rapid communication between places ever so little distant from each other was not among the practical advantages of that age. Besides which all communication between the capital and the revolted city was cut off, and the fugitives from the latter in the elector's suite were not over-anxious to give a detailed version of the affair. A thousand exaggerated reports and wild conjectures were consequently afloat, but Ulrick was far better-informed than the generality of his comrades, from his intimacy at the palace with several members of the household, and from his having passed a portion of the day which our story has now reached with Duchess Anne and his cousins Freda and Emma. He was therefore much sought after among the groups of idle and curious youths who thronged the path, or lounged on the banks of the river; and it was while in the midst of one of those, and answering as fast as he could the thick-coming questions of his companions, that he was startled by another student, who had just joined the party, announcing aloud that a stranger, evidently of distinction, and who, though travelling *incog.*, had been recognised as the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, had half an hour before arrived in the city, and taken up his quarters at the principal hostel situated in the chief square. While Ulrick paused suddenly in his recital, and then in his turn put some questions to the new comer, he observed, in the act of listening, close by, a man with dark hair and beard, a large mantle and slouched hat, the feather of which hung over, and partly concealed his features. This person, as soon as Ulrick's eye was fixed on him, held up a letter which he immediately again concealed beneath his cloak. The young student, alive to any prospect of adventure, and filled at the moment with one prominent thought, seized the first opportunity of breaking away from his companions, and

approached the stranger who loitered in the avenue. As Ulrick passed him, throwing a significant glance, he placed the billet in his hands. It was in a moment torn open, and contained the following words hastily written, in ink that was scarcely dry:—

“The crisis of my fate has arrived. Let it be also that of our happiness! A hateful husband comes to claim me—shall I not find an adored lover ready to snatch me from his grasp? Oh, Leckenstein, it is to you only I can now look—on you alone may I depend! You will not abandon me,—I know you will not. Come to me, then, at once, guided by the bearer of this, our faithful and disinterested friend. He will manage everything for our immediate flight. Alas! alas! what a dreadful struggle have I had with myself before I could thus tell you that I am wholly and for ever yours, Anne.

“It is my tears—tears of shame and of love which have so blotted the paper.”

Leckenstein could scarcely command his faculties sufficiently to allow of his clearly understanding what he with difficulty read. His brain swam, and his eyes saw through a mist; yet he devoured with imperfect vision the delicious repast thus opened before his vanity. His first movement was to press the exquisite epistle to his lips. Then in the fervour of his delight he crushed it in his clenched hands—but a bitter shock was the consequence, in fear lest he had destroyed this precious proof of his triumph. “A sovereign princess! A woman so elevated in rank, so beautiful in person, so lovely in mind!” This was the sequence in which Von Leckenstein’s feelings followed each other. He was beside himself with transport. He forgot the very purport of the billet in the rapture it inspired. But there was one close at hand to recal him to himself. The stranger pulled his mantle, and said, as Ulrick started, and looked round,

“Is your mind made up? Will you let her perish?” The hoarse whisper in which this was said, evidently to conceal the speaker’s voice, sounded mysteriously in Ulrick’s ear. Before he could answer, the man added,

“There is no time to be lost. If you would save her, and secure your own triumph, follow me!”

The last words were a command rather than an entreaty.

Ulrick instinctively obeyed them ; and the quick pace of his guide was too slow for his buoyant anxiety. He scarcely felt the ground as he hurried on, close to his fast-striding conductor.

"What a conquest ! How quickly — how easily made ! How desperately she loves me ! — a sovereign princess !" So soliloquised the ambitious and self-enamoured student ; and ravished by the music of those oft-repeated thoughts, he looked neither to the right nor to the left, nor did a single doubt or fear arise to check their harmony, till, on coming in sight of the electoral palace, the stranger stopped short, turned round, raised his hat, and looked full in Leckenstein's face.

"Need I pull off my false beard, friend Ulrick ?" said he, with a laugh half of mockery, half of triumph.

"Good God ! Is this you, count ! alive and *here* ! why it is reported and believed that you were killed in the pillage of the palace at Cologne — and again that you ——"

"Well, well, all reports are false but the true one which I make of myself, that I am here, unscathed and ready to serve a friend, and save the woman who adores him. Is your mind made up ?"

"What a craven wretch you must suppose me, to think it ever wavered ! Lead on, Count Scotus, my impatience knows no bounds. Where is the dear and beloved object of ——"

"Patience, patience, good Ulrick. You have the whole game in your hands, you must not throw it away."

"Oh, count, can I believe all this ? Does the princess indeed love me ?"

"What did I tell you the first evening we met at Ghebhard's table ? Was I not a true prophet ?"

"You are a marvellous one, if this be indeed real."

"If ! Have you not the proof there in characters not to be blotted out ? Doubt nothing — fear nothing — but heed well my words. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg is indeed in Bonn. That babbler told the truth — and I told it to him, as I walked in search of you. I knew from his quivering eye that he was a chattering gossip, and I wanted, by the effect the sudden news would produce on you, to prepare you for the hasty billet of which I was the bearer. There, I have anticipated your question."

"You have indeed ! I was just about to ask you why you told this news to a man you did not know."

"You see, Ulrick, I *did* know something of him — as I did of you the first hour I sat in your company. But be thankful that I did, for it is to my hint that you owe all your coming happiness. What a grand success! You will be immortalised this very night — history has a niche prepared for your name — you take your place by the side of princes! Happy, enviable Ulrick!"

"There is no time to be lost — you said so just now, count — what must be done?"

"The first thing, my young friend, is to restrain your impatience; the next to follow me. Then you must throw yourself at the feet of your royal mistress — *royal*, Ulrick! The lover, the beloved of a king's daughter and a sovereign's wife! Once there — I will take care to place you — you must follow the dictates of your passion. That will teach a man of twenty what he ought to do. But be prepared for resistance, remonstrance, refusal."

"What, after such a letter as this?"

"Tut, tut, Ulrick, you know little yet of woman. It is in the very moment of consent, ay, when they throw themselves into a lover's arms, that they show the greatest semblance of reserve."

"Indeed!"

"Ay, indeed, and you must be prepared to find it so this very evening. But let nothing daunt you. Push well the advantage you have gained. Press her to instant flight; speak boldly of her letter, even should she feign ignorance of your meaning, or deny the fact. Remember all she has at stake, and what a desperate yet deep game she must play."

"She has indeed!" said Ulrick, thoughtfully, and then added, before Scotus could resume, "But whither are we to fly? How escape pursuit? and by what means provide for the cost of this perilous step?"

"And do you then think," replied the Italian, with his usual glance of malicious contempt, "that the princess has not settled all this beforehand? I am her counsellor, my friend, and we have the whole plan laid down. There is no time to explain it to you now; but you must speak to her as if it were all arranged by joint accord. Speak of the boat to cross the river — the horses on the opposite bank — the safe retreat, and all

in a loud and earnest tone. Women hate whisperers when there is matter of moment to be done."

"Count, I owe you everything for this hurried but important advice."

"Good! but beware of mentioning my name to her. It will be more delicate to make believe that there is no third person concerned."

"But what use is there in such unmeaning deception?"

"Oh, women like all that by-play, even in the most straightforward cases."

"Well, well, I am but your pupil, count."

"An apt one."

"And a docile."

"Come on, then, and take the prize of your talents and your obedience."

They walked away towards the straggling ground and rough plantation behind the palace. It was rarely that it suited Scotus's purposes to enter boldly by the front of any building. After some further conversation and repeated instruction as to Ulrick's course of conduct in the coming interview, the associates approached the private way leading to the apartments occupied by Duchess Anne and her friends Freda and Emma. Those appropriated to the use of Agnes de Mansfelt the previous day were now vacant. The appearance of Scotus was a passport for admission for himself and whoever might accompany him. He therefore merely bowed to the attendants, who loitered on the way and reverentially saluted him, and he passed silently on, followed by Von Leckenstein.

The reader may have been surprised at this quick re-appearance on the stage of one whom there was good reason to believe was otherwise disposed of. We therefore hasten to tell that Scotus, well aware of the nullity of the document given to him by Bishop Ernest, lost no time in arranging it in such a manner as to make it amply effective for a value infinitely greater than its nominal one. At the first halting-place for the refreshment of Imogen, himself, and the horses on the road from Cologne to Aachen, he dexterously erased the whole of the writing contained in the treacherous treasury order, meant for his death-warrant, with the exception of the date, his own name, the epithets of honour attending it, and the writer's signature. He carried abundant materials about with him to effect all such

purposes as that, and he had, as has been repeatedly shown, an aptitude for forgery as convenient as his conscience was flexible. He therefore speedily and cleverly inserted in the blank space an order on the bishop's intendant and the comptroller of his private affairs, for the immediate delivery, to "the well-beloved and most honourable bearer, Count Jerome Scotus," of the caskets containing the state jewels, and of an escort suited to his rank and the importance of his mission to ensure his safe passage back to "our Electoral Palace of Cologne."

No human being was ever better adapted than was Scotus for carrying on an impudent fraud. His air of haughty condescension and cold decision might have deceived the most suspicious functionary. On the present occasion it was quite successful. The intendant knew well the important part which Scotus played in his master's political intrigues, and he never doubted the authenticity of his present demand, particularly when accompanied by the longed-for, but not so soon expected, intelligence of the success of the revolt, and of Bishop Ernest's actual installation in the elector's palace, with sundry fictitious details of imaginary events — all founded on a sufficient basis of reality to give force and consistency to the whole. Scotus received the caskets, filled with their valuable contents. He could scarcely believe in this continued train of good luck; yet he was by no means satisfied with it. Like all speculators, each new success made him more insatiable. His cupidity and his cunning were alike involved in the anxiety for other schemes; and a most unlooked-for occurrence threw him into the way of the new adventure, in the commencement of which we have just left him.

Scarcely had he received the jewels from the hands of the rejoiced intendant to whom he gave receipts and duplicates of receipts, acknowledgments, and acquittances, so multiplied, verbose, and superabundantly cautious, that he could not suppress a smile as he signed them, and just as he quitted the city of Liege, accompanied by his secretary and his escort of an officer and twenty mounted arquebusiers, the intendant and three or four others of the episcopal ministers, and some of the civil dignitaries attending him beyond the gates, when he was abruptly met by the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, travelling with all possible speed in the direction of Cologne, in consequence of the pressing communications received from Scotus, on the sub-

ject of Duchess Anne's imputed passion for Von Leckenstein, and mysterious allusions to other transactions said to implicate her honour and that of her husband in various ways.

Scotus was surprised, but not disconcerted, at this rencontre ; for he was at the moment considering the best means of giving his convoy the slip before they approached the territory of Cologne, having already made up his mind to avoid the high roads as long as he was obliged, for appearance sake, to travel in company with the escort. The duke, on seeing his secret correspondent, had no doubt but that he came expressly from Cologne to meet him ; nor had he time to marvel at the armed troop evidently in attendance on the Italian, ere the latter, promptly following up the duke's acknowledgment for his supposed attention in having come so far to meet him, told him, with great deference of manner, that the escort was furnished entirely in honour of his highness. Men of that station in those days were too prone to believe everything that tended to flatter their dignity. The rude lessons of modern times have made them less credulous, but even now a courtly hypocrite might find little difficulty in deceiving a sovereign prince on a more serious point than the one in question.

Scotus entered the duke's carriage ; and a short discussion, in which the former took the lead, the pre-occupied prince taking no heed of details, ended in its being decided that, at the close of evening, the escort was to be dismissed, and the rest of the journey to be prosecuted as privately as possible. The deeds already done by the Italian were sufficient to make privacy essential to his present safety. But the necessity of self-preservation—for a confession on the part of Duchess Anne would have made Europe too narrow for his future protection—now determined him to the commission of an act, the notion of which had at times floated on his mind, but had never acquired the consistency of decision until now. He felt Duchess Anne's existence to be incompatible with his own ; at least on such conditions as he would live upon ; so that, independent of his mercenary views on the duke, he had an all-sufficient motive for the risk of his present journey. The proposed plan of travelling was followed ; and in the course of the two days occupied in the route to Bonn, the city of Cologne being carefully avoided, ample time was given to Scotus to inform and mis-inform his royal companion and

dupe on every subject of a public or private nature which it suited his purpose to touch on. When they arrived at their destination, the deceived and exasperated prince was ripe and ready for any act of violence against his innocent wife and her imputed paramour; while, with the spurious generosity of a jealous man, he lavished on the wretch who so played on him, written engagements, easily convertible into cash, for sums of great amount as the reward of his services—vile even if he had spoken truth instead of inventing lies. Having disposed of the duke, Scotus immediately flew to the palace, where he had learned by a scout sent to Cologne, and thence preceding him to Bonn, that Duchess Anne was lodged, while at the same time he gained the favourable information that the elector had set out the same morning for his palace at Godesberg, a short league distant. The ground was thus clear for his operations. There was no one to question him as to his former conduct, or to interfere with him now. By all the elector's household he was believed to be the friend and guest of Truchses, and he had no inquiry to fear as to the cause of his disappearance during the previous day, and which had led to the report of his having perished in the tumult at Cologne. He was therefore unobstructed in his approach to Duchess Anne—and his announcement of the duke's arrival and coming visit so convinced her of the sincerity and success of all his former doings, as to throw the credulous princess into a transport of joy and confidence, which prepared her thoroughly for even a grosser imposition than the one he was about to inflict on her. Callous to that most affecting sight, an amiable woman trusting to man's honour and sincerity, the hardened villain proceeded to her ruin in cold-blooded avarice; and loving imposture even when it was not necessary, he put on one of his ready disguises when he sallied forth with the forged letter in search of Von Leckenstein, another unconscious victim to his atrocity.

Everything turned out in favour of the Italian's base designs. He was like a fortunate gambler in a career of luck; his most dangerous strokes succeeded. His victims seemed to play into his hands. But be it remembered that he calculated with skill both characters and chances. It has been said that conduct is fate: let it be added, that cunning is fortune.

Having placed the Duke of Saxe-Coburg with three or

four of his followers in a place contiguous to the palace, where they could observe him as he entered with Von Leckenstein, he had now only to introduce the latter to an ante-room adjoining the most private chamber of Duchess Anne, with directions to wait until he had prepared her for his appearance, when the Italian was to retire, giving a signal to the lover—as the poor youth fancied himself—to at once enter on the final scene of his expected triumph.

“My benefactor—my saviour! oh, how your presence rejoices me!” were the exclamations with which the enthusiastic duchess hailed the coming of the destroyer, as he entered her chamber. Scotus started with astonishment, on seeing that she was clothed in robes of bridal white, and richly decorated with the contents of the casket which Agnes had placed in her hands, two nights previously, in the palace of Cologne. Surprise alone had not so affected the Italian’s nerves if delight had not completed the electric combination. He required no explanation of what he saw. He read the mind of the princess as easily as he could a printed page.

“Ah! adorable duchess,” exclaimed he, “what a charming device is this! Who but you could have imagined so exquisite a plan to bring back a wayward mind to the memory of its first, best joys? This is indeed like yourself, pure and beautiful.”

“You approve, then, my receiving him thus? It cannot be construed into affectation, nor accused of trick?”

“Who durst apply such terms to any act of yours? No; this is the symbol of a truly innocent delight, and its effect will be marvellous. The duke will fancy himself once more a bridegroom—this will be a night of enchantment!”

The duchess cast down her eyes to avoid the expression of countenance which accompanied these words. It was a terrible mixture of loose feeling and concentrated villany, one of those looks which a virtuous woman dares not read even if she could. Scotus saw its effect.

“Ah! forgive me,” cried he, “if hopeless passion and fierce jealousy carry me away for a moment. But I as quickly return to my great object—to secure your bliss and forget my own misery. I am the slave of your happiness—I sacrifice all to that.”

“Alas, Count Scotus!” replied the duchess, the chords of

vanity and pleasure vibrating in strange discord with those of modesty and fear, "alas that you should suffer, while I by your means alone am placed on the very summit of enjoyment! Oh! how intoxicating is recovered confidence and the return of estranged affection! How wild I am in my happiness! I know not what to do or say. I could almost worship you from very gratitude. I am like a lost child brought back to its home. I laugh and weep at once. God grant that my poor brain may stand firm, nor turn mad with joy!"

The duchess burst into tears, and sank, sobbing hysterically, on a chair. Scotus did not fall at her feet in remorse and shame. He stood still, with folded arms, unflinching nerves, and unmoistened eye, a model of most hideous villany. To plunge an enemy into ruin—to trample on him who has wronged us—to force a poisoner to drain to the dregs the draught he mixed for another—to turn against a false friend the weapons of his treason, all this is within the legitimate scope of vengeance. But to lead a virtuous mind to ruin for base lucre, to raise up one who trusts you to a height of imagined bliss only to dash them down in greater certainty of destruction, is the very wantonness of crime. It is in human nature, but as a poison drop in a fragrant flower, an occult and rarely-extracted exception to its brightness and sweetness. So stood Jerome Scotus on this occasion, while his beautiful victim trembled with agitation, and wondered that he uttered not one word of relief or encouragement. She would have laid her hand on his—but she dreaded his touch. The sound of his voice would have been both balm and music to her scattered nerves. His silence was a negative cruelty of terrible effect, and he was resolved to let it work. At length, agitated beyond farther bearing, the duchess exclaimed,

"Oh, speak to me, Count Scotus! say any thing, of hope, encouragement—blame even, if I have done wrong in this fantastic decoration of my person; ay, of despair, if you have any doubt of our success. Your silence kills me; I feel as if hurled down into depths of gloom."

"Nay, fair duchess, do not thus sport with your own happiness, nor construe falsely my silent admiration of your charms, and my fear of interrupting your sacred glow of feelings. Those tears are the gushings of joy—that trembling

its excitement. Mistake not those exquisite symptoms for their own reverse. All will be well. And now recover yourself; for you have a great part to play."

"Alas, I am a poor actor, and much I fear me I shall be an imperfect one. Had I not after all better trust to nature's prompting, than seek for effects from artificial means?"

"What! do you, then, at this moment of triumph run counter to my counsel?"

"Oh, no — but ——"

"Do you doubt my skill, thus brought to its grand test? Enough! speak not, I see you are reassured; and well you may be so, for great has been my labour and perfect its success. Follow up then your own good fortune with spirit and confidence. Nothing else is wanting now. The duke comes back, enamoured to excess; and jealousy has effected what reason, virtue, and duty failed to do. That strong excitement was required to lead him back, and it is on its all powerful impulse that your fate now hangs. It must now work on him in earnest."

"Still! must we still play upon his feelings, still stoop to deceit? Oh, not for less than his recovered heart would I have ever done this!"

"Nor would I for less have counselled it. But having gone so far we must go on. The vain fool Leckenstein waits without. Will you now admit him?"

"Oh, not yet! In mercy, Count Scotus, spare me yet awhile, and support me, cheer me up, for my spirit begins to faint. Heavens! must I play this cruel farce to the end? my brow blushes at the thought. Am I not degraded low, in leading on this youth to those manifestations of weakness, and the suffering it must lead to? Can any purpose of my own good justify this injury to another?"

"To be sure it can," replied the callous-conscienced deceiver—"for even supposing it an ill, bountiful nature always yields a compensation. So far in answer to your doubt as to the right to act for your own good. But in fact you do no injury, but good rather, in teaching this insolent boy a lesson for his life. How durst he raise his thoughts to one like you, or imagine you could receive his love?"

Scotus saw that this argument did not produce its effect; for the vanity of having inspired young Ulrick's affection

excused his presumption. The Italian therefore turned against her her own weapon of defence.

"But think not, duchess," said he, abruptly, "that he loves you. I find I must set you right at last. It is sheer pride in your rank that leads him on. He comes in the glory of conquest, not in the humility of passion, to throw himself at your feet, that he may boast of having trampled you under his. You doubt? you are wounded, disgusted, shocked; so ought you to be—for he has told me this."

"Told you this!"

"Ay, and for that it is that I have no compassion in his punishment. It is due to your honour and to his baseness. Every element of your dignity as princess and as woman should rise up to crush him."

Every element of Duchess Anne's weakness *did* rise up to mortify her keenly, and to urge her to fling back the indignity on him who was presented to her in a point of view so humiliating to herself. The crowd of her feelings now seemed to have found a point round which they might rally. A double triumph seemed within her reach—and she now at length entered, with her whole heart and without a qualm, into the plan against which all the better and finer feelings of her nature had revolted. A presumed offence against her vanity produced an effect more powerful than a project for her happiness.

"Then let this presumptuous conqueror come in," said she; "and do you, my invaluable friend, prepare my lord for the scene, which he is to overhear and I am now quite ready to act."

"Noble princess! Admirable woman! Inimitable wife! You now stand on the summit of your triply-founded throne, fit to be obeyed, and worshipped by the world."

With the utterance of those words the Italian retired; and the duchess, after pacing the room with a few haughty strides, took her place on a couch, ready to receive her lover.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"THERE, there, Ulrick, is the open way to your bliss. She awaits you, in bridal robes and royal decorations! Go in, man, and reap the rich harvest which I have sown for you," said Scotus, as he passed into the outer room, and led the almost bewildered youth to the door which opened into the duchess's chamber. As Leckenstein entered, he disappeared, and, bounding in the buoyancy of an evil spirit on a mission of ill, he soon found the half-maddened husband and his satellites, and led them unobstructed by another passage to the dressing-closet of the duchess, the door of which he left open by preconcerted arrangement with her, so as that every word which passed between her and Leckenstein might be distinctly heard. The duchess had previously dismissed her attendants, with orders not to interrupt the visit of Count Scotus and his friend, whom she expected to come with him, to an important conference. The stage was therefore clear for this chief scene of the desperate drama about to be acted.

Ulrick entered the chamber with that boldest species of temerity which arises from inflated hope. Every look of the Italian, the tone of his voice, was of still more powerful effect than the words he uttered. Ulrick saw a paradise where there was but a prison, and fancied himself a hero, being but a dupe. The sight of the princess reclined on her couch, paler than the robes she wore, and, with an expression of countenance he could by no means penetrate, completely overwhelmed him. He sank at once from rashness to timidity. She, on her part, perceiving his emotion, and reading in its evident symptoms a sincerity and a modesty so different from what she had expected, was in her turn deeply affected; and thus, without a word being spoken, the daring youth and the indignant princess in an instant resumed their original simplicity of character, and proved to be quite unfitted to sustain the parts they had so promptly assumed. Scotus, knowing the yielding nature of both, felt that no time was to be lost; and, as soon as Leckenstein had recovered himself sufficiently to stammer out a few sentences

of admiration, and love, and gratitude, a faint rustling in the closet told Duchess Anne that the Italian accompanied by her husband had taken their appointed station.

This certainty completed the total loss of self-possession which the trembling utterance and timid looks of Ulrick had begun to effect. She felt that her husband's ear was ready to catch her words, that his eye might be fixed on her from the scarcely closed door. A sense of shame and dread rushed on her. One pang of thought upset the deep-wrought fallacies of her betrayer, and the entire of those hopes and calculations which were built on them. She viewed herself in the light of a false practiser of unholy arts, an accomplice in base plots, doubly deceiving her husband and this lover — for in that real aspect only she could now see Leckenstein — degrading her rank, her sex, her own purity — the veil was torn from her eyes, and this was the prospect she beheld. Silent, almost breathless from very fear, and choked with a thousand struggling emotions, she scarcely heard the voice of Ulrick, as he, recovering confidence from her abstraction, and interpreting it into returning tenderness, threw himself on his knees before her, and poured out incoherent rhapsodies of passion, raising his voice, and rapidly pressing on his suit in accordance with the Italian's instructions. Many minutes rolled on ; and at length Ulrick reached what he believed the climax of his eloquence, when he perceived the big tears trickle down the pallid cheeks of the duchess, and saw that she had not strength for even an attempt to check them, while the respiration which just heaved her breast was too faint to swell into a sigh.

"Now, now then, divinest of women!" exclaimed he, "now is the time to crown my happiness by instant flight. The boat is ready by the river side, the horses wait us on the shore beyond. Everything is arranged according to our plans. Let us then fly ere thy hated husband has time to approach thee, while love and hope and happiness all urge us on."

The duchess, though unable to utter a word, understood fully all that was said, and she shrunk back repugnant from the embraces which the ardent youth would have lavished on her. She would have given worlds for power to speak one sentence to repel her insinuated complicity in the plans for

flight. But her tongue seemed to cleave to her parched mouth, and a faint hysteric sobbing were the only sounds she uttered.

"Oh, why this hesitation, adored princess? By this precious document of affection, I implore thee pause not. To the warm words of thy letter and the warmer tears which blotted the paper I appeal, as better arguments than any I can urge. Fly, oh, fly with me — or here, in the sacred solitude of this paradise, complete my happiness, and then let fate do its worst."

Leckenstein having approached closer and closer, now attempted to press the almost fainting duchess in his arms. At the moment the closet door was burst open, and the Duke of Saxe-Coburg rushed in, his drawn sword in his hand, and followed by a person closely masked and covered with a mantle, and three others, whose brandished weapons and unvisored faces showed them ready to do, and not ashamed to look upon, any deed of destruction or darkness.

The duke, with furious imprecations, called on the astounded Leckenstein to defend himself, while his arm was held by his masked follower, who seemed anxious to save the youth from a too hasty blow. But while the duke was thus secured from any act of intemperate fury, his armed creatures, thirsting for blood, rushed on the defenceless student, and ere he had time to place his hand on his weapon's hilt two of their blades were plunged into his body. He sunk weltering in his blood, which spirted profusely out upon the bridal robes of the now totally insensible duchess. Scotus, seeing there were no eyes now open to recognise him, threw aside his mask, and flung himself between the murderers and the victim, ere they could repeat their blows, and called out loudly to the duke to prevent the completion of the tragedy — there. The hint was obeyed, and the unfortunate Ulrick was dragged from the chamber, unconscious of the violence and the indignity inflicted on his person. Scotus then watched with fiendish expectation for the stroke which the furious husband had sworn he would himself inflict on his helpless wife. But, instead of thus completing the guilty measure of his frenzy, he stood gazing on her beautiful but death-like face, and shocked that the fury of his followers had in a way so unmanly robbed his own arm of the vengeance which it alone should have executed, he lost for

awhile all feelings of anger, all thought of revenge, in the overpowering horror of the scene. And, had time been given for the duchess to recover her recollection, and to plead her cause in the affecting ardour of innocence, he would in such a mood have been more open to conviction than in the calmest moments of suspicion or indifference. But as melted wax, ready to receive the first impression which follows the fusion, so did his heated mind offer itself to the first impulse which was urged on it; and this came in a form irresistibly insidious.

"Most noble duke, this is enough for the present," said Scotus, seeing that all the better feelings were at work in the prince's heart, and now determined to remove him from the scene; "your honour is avenged—push no further your just wrath."

"As Heaven is my judge, Count Scotus," replied the duke, "I have no such design nor desire. More has been done already than I intended, and even had it not, the sight of that fair, frail sufferer—the victim of my own neglect—had satisfied all my anger. How beautiful she is! yet what lines of anguish mark her lovely face! Compunction is far stronger in me now than vengeance. Am I not after all to blame for this? Should I have left her unguarded to the dangers of her own beauty, and her own innocence, while I pursued fantastic objects that fled and vanished as I followed them? Is not the blood of that poor youth on my head, though it has not stained my sword? Am I not the most guilty of the three?"

"This train of thought does honour to your highness's heart. I will not combat the reasonings of a generous humanity. Rather let me encourage it, and urge on your highness that the sight of your person, breaking suddenly on her recovered senses, would infallibly plunge the duchess into some violent convulsion. Had you not better retire, and leave it to my care to remove her with Archibald, he who struck no blow against her lover's breast?"

"Her lover!—True! you have roused me to myself again. By Heavens, I was on the point of bending down beside her, to watch her opening eyes, to speak comfort to her reviving consciousness, to own the wrong I have done her, and to forgive the errors which they begot! Even now I can scarce

refrain from clasping her in my arms, and straining her into life and love once more !”

“ Would she accept your embraces ? But yes — your highness is perhaps right — she might for awhile believe them to be Leckenstein’s.”

The duke bit his lip and clenched his hands. Scotus watched keenly, and saw these answers to his innuendo. He continued, with a careless air,

“ But your highness had better sheathe your sword. It so lately menaced the life of a dear friend that it might not find favour in her sight.”

“ Count, you can read the human heart better than I. I will follow your advice. Bear her, but gently and with all possible delicacy, to the hostel. I will precede you, and have all ready for instant departure,” said the duke, putting his sword in its scabbard, and preparing to leave the room.

“ And these gems which decorate her highness ? The eyes they were meant for rejoice not in them — how may they be disposed of ? ”

“ Worthless baubles ! they deserve not a thought — let them remain as they are, or drop on the road, it is of no matter now.”

“ Your highness is known for a good judge of diamonds,” muttered Scotus to himself, unable to repress a sneer and a smile. The duke neither heard nor heeded him ; but, stepping to the door to call in the man whom the Italian required as an assistant, he saw him in the ante-room, leaning over the still breathing body of Leckenstein. The other two — the assassins — had left the palace, satisfied with their work and believing it complete. The duke motioned to Archibald to return to the inner room ; and, humanity rising stronger than all other feelings, he stooped over the bleeding youth in hopes of finding some chance of returning life. As he took up one of the nerveless hands in his, a paper fell from it. The duke had a buzzing recollection of the impassioned allusion to a letter, made by Ulrick as he pressed ~~his~~ suit. He looked on the paper, recognised, as he would have sworn, his wife’s handwriting, read the billet, then thrust it into his breast ; and, with one glance of rage and contempt, he spurned the senseless body with his foot, and hastily strode away.

Scotus enveloped the duchess in one of her rich mantles

which he found at hand ; and, preventing the attempts of the softened ruffian to apply water or other means of recovery, he placed her in the fellow's arms, and led the way from the chamber. He marked Ulrick's body as he passed, bathed in its blood ; and as he moved, without a shudder of remorse, though perhaps fear caused an inward thrill, he encountered some of the attendants, who, on seeing the murderers flying, so soon followed by the fierce-looking duke, had, in spite of the duchess's prohibition, gathered together, and proceeded towards the remote wing where this tragedy was acted. The authoritative air of Scotus did not fail him ; and the awe he was held in ensured obedience to his commands.

"Go on, my friends," said he, "you will find Herr Von Leckenstein in the ante-room, wounded by an accident. Summon his uncle and cousins to his aid. The duchess must be removed from the sight of the blood—I take her to the duke, who is gone forward to the hostel. Be discreet as to this affair. It is a mere trifle."

A series of obsequious bows answered this brief speech. Let the listeners have imagined what they might, those were not the days for questioning the doings of princes, nobles, or bravoes, particularly within the walls of a palace.

As the group emerged from the courtyard, the air and the motion awoke the duchess for a moment from her fainting-fit. But her eyes closed and her heart sunk instantly again ; and then she revived, and relapsed at intervals, nor did she recover her senses sufficiently to distinguish objects or recollect facts, until she found herself stretched on a loathsome bed in a miserable hut, faintly lighted by a mean lamp, with Scotus in the very act of preparing to lift her in his arms. A feeble shriek and a faint struggle told him she was conscious of her situation. A flash of hope crossed his mind that she might have lost her reason. He held her from him, stared intently on her face, which he turned towards the glimmering light, and he held in his breath with anxiety for her first words.

"Oh, Count Scotus," said she, in tones barely articulate, but spoken with all the reality of reason, "where am I, what does this mean? The duke, the duke! has aught befallen him? The murdered Leckenstein—I fear to ask more—but oh, tell me all ere my heart bursts with horror!"

"Hush, hush, for your life and soul! Discovery will be

ruin to us both. I have snatched you from the furious duke, baffled his myrmidons, and am about to carry you to a place of safety till this frightful mistake is rectified by the sublime exercise of my art."

"O God, O God! pity, and pardon, and protect me!" exclaimed the duchess; and tears once more gushed from her heart's fountains to her straining eyes.

"It is my fault, and mine alone," continued the Italian, "that failure has in this instance stopped our triumphant progress. But the perverseness of the duke and the audacity of Leckenstein were beyond all common calculations. I know them better now, and my next experiment must succeed."

"Leckenstein lives then, and my husband is safe?"

"Ay, ay—there is no harm done—a scratch, a mere scratch to that bold boy. You may save or punish him yet, as you may choose. But your own safety is the first object. The raging duke seeks your and my destruction. I saved you from his sword—and I would now preserve you from his search. Inquire not, object not, but accompany me from this hovel where I have hitherto concealed you."

"Where would you lead me—how long have I been here? What frightful lapse of time have I gone through insensible—is't day or night—where am I?" wildly asked the duchess, her voice gaining strength and her body recovering its energies.

"For your very soul's sake hush those questionings and trust to me implicitly—an incautious word, a moment lost, is now perdition. We must seek shelter beyond the Rhine; and as we go I can safely and surely work my spells. Ah, had not my over-anxious zeal to hurry on your happiness urged me too fast, all had been well! Had I not tried my solemn practices on land, and strove to force the ken of science through an envious mass of clouds last night, the great combination had been complete. But now the stars, Heaven's brilliant types, are out—and the swelling water offers its bosom to my ready bark, inviting us at once to safety from man's wrong, and reflecting the bright tokens of Heaven's justice. Seize, then, the propitious moment with calm confidence and glowing hope; let your prayers be directed towards those smiling skies, while your mind reads nature's

oracles which I will now propound to you, without chance of harm or hindrance. Come, come, most lovely one! See, persecuting fate relents, and the broad harbour of happiness invites you to its refuge. Repose on my courage, my skill, and my energy. Think what I have already done for you. How near I was to the consummation of all—how sure I am of success. The duke is now close by me as it were—within the influence of the stars, whose magic rays stream down on his very head and whose essence enters into his heart. Oh, you shall see the wondrous exercise of my powers, and your beaming looks and ardent sighs shall mingle with heaven's light and breath! Come, come."

The unfortunate duchess felt her heart cold at the bare mention of the Rhine—for she remembered that night when the Italian's words and looks drove her from its banks, in terror to the grove. But his jargon blandishments, his soothing voice, her own superstitious yearnings hushing her fears—one weakness gaining an ignoble victory over another—she arose, and, accepting his proffered arm, she quitted the hut; but she started back, and would have rushed again to its security, on seeing the broad dark river rolling almost close to her feet, had he not held her firm, and with a whispered pretext of supporting almost lifted her the few paces across the raised embankment, down its sloping side, and into a boat which lay moored close by.

When Scotus held the Duke of Saxe-Coburg's arm as he burst into his wife's chamber, it was in the hope that the blade he obstructed would have been immediately turned against the breast of the princess, for he it was who had directed the bravoës and paid them beforehand, to save the duke from the risk of a combat, by killing the student on the spot. When he perceived that generous regret gained the mastery over false passion, and that the duchess ran no danger of becoming her husband's victim, he resolved to complete the sacrifice himself, for he dreaded that with her recovered senses she would make an ample revelation of all that had passed, to her own and Ulrick's justification, and to the utter blasting of his character. Besides, he hated her—though he had never loved her—for being insensible to the passion he had feigned for her person. Had his attachment been real it might have been returned; for the birth of true passion almost always, if

not always—there may be a rare exception—engenders a twin-feeling in the being from whom it catches the flame of life. But, be this as it may, he hated and resolved to murder her. The dark bed of the Rhine was the surest and least likely to be discovered depository for her lifeless body ; and as he proceeded to the execution of his project, he coldly calculated the leagues which it would probably be carried by the quick current, ere some chance wave threw it upon shore. It has been seen how cleverly he got rid of the duke ; and scarcely had he quitted the palace, with Archibald the bravo, than he relieved the latter from the burden which he panted to get into his own grasp, and sent him on an errand, meaning nothing, to the place of rendezvous ; he immediately turning from it into an opposite direction and down upon that of the river.

During this time the dusk of evening had given place to the darkness of night. It seemed as if earth and heaven had shut their eyes upon the villain's doings. He found no obstacle whatever. Even the patrols, so watchful in that bustling political crisis, appeared to avoid his path. He met only one man. His keen eye recognised the Reitre Captain Von Sweinishen, but, as the latter seemed to heed him not, he passed on and reached the river's side, the person of the duchess almost entirely covered by his ample cloak, and its little weight offering no obstruction to his progress. He had in the evening remarked a fisherman's hovel, and saw a ragged and squalid pair, its occupants, lounging listlessly at the door, just opposite to which a clumsy-looking skiff lay lightly on the wave, fastened by a chain to the shore. Scotus had now reached this place, and would have willingly entered the boat and proceeded at once to the consummation of his diabolical design, but he found the chain locked to an iron ring, and perceived through the dim obscurity that the boat contained no oars. His first notion was to deposit the still senseless princess within it, and then to seek the fisherman and obtain the wanting implements which would enable him to pass over, disencumbered and alone, to the opposite side of the river. But he feared lest his victim might recover her senses, cry out for help, and attempt to escape ; and he also thought he heard steps and whispering voices—a guilty conscience makes populous a desert's gloom. He paused, and stooped down with his

burden to the earth, that he might be more perfectly concealed and at the same time peer around with greater chance of discovering any human figure which might be crouching, like himself. He saw nothing but the fisherman's hut and the dark trees faintly waving in the breeze ; and he could only hear the melancholy rustle of the leaves, and the quiet splash of the water against the river's bank and the sides of the skiff, and the distant murmur of the town. There were a few stars glimmering above, but no moonlight, and not wind enough to curl the waves into foam.

"She will sink soon and deep, and travel far below the surface without any chance of being washed ashore in this still night," murmured Scotus unconsciously, as his eye rested on the heavy-rolling stream.

At this moment he felt his hitherto motionless burden heave in a faint struggle ; and he loosened the clasp of his own cloak, and threw it into the nearest end of the boat, to mark her disembarrassed movements. She seemed relieved from the oppression, but was again still and listless. He put his face closer to hers. He caught no breathing on his cheek ; but a faint, faint moan, like the fairy wailings of an infant's dream, belied the notion that she was already dead. He then folded her mantle carefully around her, and proceeded to the hut. A light was within, and low voices told that the wretched couple were reciprocating the monotonous plaint of their misery—what else have the poor, the sickly, and the ignorant to discuss ?

A gentle tap at the door, and an almost whispered invitation to open it was all the wary Italian ventured on. The double summons was answered by the raising of the latch and the appearance of the man, undressed as he had lain in his bed. Before he could make any inquiry of his visitor, the latter asked rapidly if he were not the owner of the skiff, and if he would hire it for the purpose of crossing the river.

"I am," and "willingly," were the brief replies ; and a few minutes sufficed to allow the fisherman and his wife to throw on their scanty covering, while Scotus entered and placed the scarcely-breathing duchess on the bed, and gave orders to the man to fetch the oars and unlock the chain, and to the woman to look out at a short distance from the cottage lest there might be some straggling passers-by. The air and

appearance of the Italian, and the glittering richness of the duchess's ornaments, were sufficient to inspire complete obedience in these poor people, even without the piece of gold which he had already placed on the table, but which, as it shone in the lamp-light gleam, both wife and husband seemed afraid or ashamed to touch. Yet to obviate any possible squeamishness on their parts as to becoming accessories in the dubious and questionable evasion, he told them, in brief phrase and low accents, that the lady was his newly-married wife, and that he fled with her from the very altar steps from her pursuing kinsmen, by whom their liberties and lives were jeopardied. Enough had before been done to secure the sympathy of the needy pair, who would have had small scruples in complying even had they doubted the tale. The abrupt entrance of the man, and his loud announcement that all was ready and no one in sight, aroused the duchess into that start of recovered sense which we have before described.

Scotus had shoved the boat from the shore, the fisherman's dark figure was lost in the gloom, the raised bank and the tall trees were vaguely figured against the murky sky, and the duchess, chill, and trembling from speechless terror, clung to the rude damp bench on which she had sunk, as though every motion of the Italian's oar threatened to upset the boat, or cast her over its side. He for some time left her totally to herself and to her agitation, his whole efforts being directed to the object of getting the boat forward, which his awkward management of the single oar, both as oar and rudder, made difficult and tedious. He stood for this purpose at the sternmost end, and as he strode across his own cloak which lay in a heap where he flung it, his foot found an impediment in some soft substance beneath its heavy folds. He stepped over it and continued his pilotage, until having reached what he conjectured to be about the middle of the stream, the bank he had started from being now invisible, he paused and whistled shrilly. The signal was faintly answered from the other side; but nothing was now to be distinguished but the dark water, in which the starlight reflection, breaking through heavy clouds, danced quivering here and there. As Scotus now quitted the stern and was stepping towards the middle of the boat, where Duchess Anne maintained her motionless place, he stooped to touch with his hand the object which he had before

trod on, and he quickly started up and sprang forward in sudden terror, convinced that some living animal lay covered by his cloak ; exemplifying one of the strange anomalies of human nature,—he, who little feared either God or man, who laughed at common danger, and never shrunk from crime, shuddered in his heart's depths at the touch of a dog, or the sight of a cat. Antipathy to domestic animals is perhaps no bad test of an inhuman disposition. The Italian expected every moment to be seized on and torn, by some shaggy guardian of the skiff, which had hitherto slept on its watch ; but finding himself unassailed, and not hearing even a snarl, he recovered his deliberate self-command.

“ Now, Duchess Anne,” said he, sternly and abruptly, “ fate hath at length placed us fitly together. We are now indeed alone—the heavens above us, the waters underneath—we are no more mere beings of the earth, which we have quitted and lost sight of—one of us for ever. Are you prepared to die ? ”

“ To die ! O God ! What mean you by those horrid words ?—Oh, Count Scotus, do not trifle with my terrors—I am in fearful alarm—prithée, prithée, put back to land—let me meet my husband's fury, and fall by his hand, rather than linger in this agony of dread ! ”

“ Patience one moment ; it will not last long. Canst thou fathom, proud duchess, the depths of that flood ? No ; yet thy bed is ready made in its soft sands. Thou wouldst read the stars ! Ha, ha, ha ! it must then be through the magnifying medium of those waters into which you are about to sink.”

“ Alas, alas ! there is a frightful tone of truth in your terrible voice—you are not mocking my fears,—I know you are going to murder me—oh, mercy, mercy, Count Scotus ! I have done nought to injure you. What means this purpose ? Tell me, tell me—oh, say that you but sport with my weakness—that you are about to work some powerful charm, some spell for my happiness, and this is but the dreadful preface—the mysterious and awful incantation for the spirit of good you are going to raise — oh, speak me some comforting words ; turn your face towards me, that I may read your heart ! ”

The agitated supplicant rose from the bench and caught the

Italian in her arms. He flung her back rudely from him, and exclaimed,

"Not injured me! Did you not repulse my passion when I loved you? Did you not fly in disgust and terror when I wooed you—in mockery it is true, but you knew not that—by the river side? Do you not now, even when you would twine your arms around me, loathe and fear me? Are not these wrongs, and do they not merit death? But without all this you are doomed to die, and by my hand, and in the eddies of this flood—it is written—so prepare!"

He had left the boat to its random course, and, fearing that it might drift to the shore, he was resolved to finish the deed at once. He therefore approached the duchess, who lay stunned and almost senseless across the bench, and seizing her round the waist he lifted her up. But the dread of approaching death gave her new strength, and she clung faster to the bench, and screamed aloud in the hoarse hopelessness of succour. A thought flashed across her mind that seemed to promise a momentary respite from what she now felt to be her inevitable fate.

"Oh, stop, stop one minute," cried she, "but one minute, till I tear off those diamond trappings and give them to you, as a poor reward for a minute more of life."

"Foolish wretch!" vociferated the Italian, "they are as false as is your sex—they are not worth ten ducats. Know as you perish that I have had all of you worth having, in the real jewels which those counterfeits replaced—and now to finish with you!"

"Mercy, mercy!" uttered the choking voice of the duchess.

"Death, death!" responded the villain. "Hast thou ever known me for such a fool as to dream of my letting you live, that I might die? of allowing you to proclaim your own justification and brand me with infamy?"

"Oh, fear not that I shall reveal anything," cried the duchess, in new hope of touching him with compassion—"I swear eternal secrecy—I will bury myself out of sight of the whole world—I will tear my tongue out, if you but spare my life."

"The dead only tell no tales," was the villain's reply; and at length, worn out by the struggle, she offered no resistance to his attempt to raise her up, but a low panting cry of suppli-

cation which he heeded not. He lifted her in his arms, and just as he stooped towards the boat-side to plunge her into the stream, a bounding spring from the other end made the frail vessel heave to and fro, and the murderer lost his balance, ere he could effect the deed. A loud shout close to his ear accompanied a powerful blow which felled him to the floor. He sprang up again, and found himself assailed by two men, whose furious voices he recognised for those of Von Sweinishen and Von Heyen. They each seized on him, and by a sudden heave they lifted him bodily up and flung him over the side, striking him repeated blows on the head with their clenched fists, to force him from the convulsive grasp with which he still clung to the gunwale. He disappeared. But, with a last desperate clutch he had seized the body of the duchess and dragged her with him into the river's depth. Both instantly sank, her gurgling screams mixing with the oaths and exclamations which broke from the shocked men, who had meant to be her saviours and avengers. With straining eyes and outstretched arms they watched, for some seconds of fearful suspense. At last, the white-robed body of the duchess rose to the surface, and almost close to the ready hand of Von Heyen.

"God be praised! I have her!" exclaimed he, making a grasp; but a portion of the fragile garment tore away from the hapless wearer, and she sank again. A cry of agony broke from the brave young man, who, without a moment's consideration of his own danger, sprang into the river, and dived in the direction where she had disappeared. Von Sweinishen had now to support the sole burden of agitated suspense. He held the oar in both hands, afraid to move it lest he might propel the boat to the place where he hoped the bold swimmer at least would rise again, and thus cause him the risk of a stunning blow against the keel or side. In a few seconds he appeared, and though he spoke not, and that the darkness prevented his anxious comrade from seeing any certainty of his success, it was evident, from the striking out of only one of his arms in the water, that he held some heavy substance in the other below the surface.

"Heaven grant you have not missed the lady and brought up the murderer!" cried Von Sweinishen fervently — but the nearly exhausted swimmer dared not open his mouth to

reply, lest the water should rush in and take his breath entirely away.

Von Sweinishen saw, it was impossible without imminent risk of upsetting the skiff to attempt to lift in his friend or the person he held; so, the moment Von Heyen approached sufficiently near to the side to grasp the gunwale with his unencumbered hand, he worked lustily with the oar, and in a few minutes succeeded in reaching the shore just as his companion's strength had almost failed him, and as he dreaded that he should be forced either to relinquish the hold of the boat's side or let go the object he upheld with the other hand.

"Which is it?" cried Von Sweinishen, rushing from the stern, as the boat buried its prow into the soft bank.

"The duchess, the duchess!" replied Von Heyen, sinking on the rushy sedge, and with a last faint effort dragging up the body beside him.

"Then the villain, thank God, has perished! What a blessed chance that made me recognise him, and then meet you that you might follow him with me!"

"And how fortunate that his own cloak served to conceal us, where we lay down in the boat while he sought his intended victim in the hut!"

"And that we can testify to her innocence from the ruffian's own last words! Ah, Von Heyen, Providence is great and good!"

"God grant, then, that the princess still lives!"

The fisherman and his wife, who had lingered on the beach, attracted by the fearful shrieks of the duchess, the shouts of her deliverers, and the complicated noises of the tumult, now gave every help to remove the drenched and corpse-like body into the house, and to seek immediate remedies for an attempt to restore it to sensibility.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN interval of between three and four years from those principal events of our story passed over, with scenes and circumstances more publicly important, but not so minutely interesting

to the personages whose adventures we relate. Individual doings were merged in the general progress of affairs, involving more or less the fortune and the fate of almost every one of those whom we have brought forward in the foregoing pages ; and we must, in a brief sketch of the political occurrences of the epoch, abandon for awhile the more detailed attention which we have before given to persons and events.

The conversion to protestantism, and the marriage of Ghebbard Truchses, the former of which he boldly avowed, and the latter being long suspected and at length made public, were looked upon as a joint event, in the religious and political aspect which they presented to the empire and to Europe ; and, from the imperial to the papal throne, the agitation they produced was almost without parallel. The splendid talents of the elector-archbishop and the influence of his ancient and powerful family made his defection from the catholic church a matter of no common importance, for it was impossible to confound such a man with the herd of princes who had abjured the doctrines of Rome, or of the prelates who had insisted on their right of marrying, yet still retaining their mitres and their sees.

Thirty years previously, Herman, Count de Weid, one of Ghebbard's predecessors in the electoral and archiepiscopal see of Cologne, had been deprived of his dignities by the authority of a papal bull, and had quietly resigned them rather than plunge his country into war. His only offence was the countenance he had given to the Lutheran heresy. But Truchses, who had gone much further, was not thought likely to resign his rank, unless actually overpowered by material force ; and the combinations entered into for his destruction were on a scale proportioned to his probable resistance, while the efforts which he made to sustain his authority and defend his possessions justified those calculations.

The question which now arose was, on political grounds, one of considerable intricacy. Notwithstanding the reservations in favour of the catholics which had been introduced into the religious peace, the protestants still possessed many bishoprics throughout the empire, and the present case could not be considered as exactly within those reservations, as it did not concern the election of a new prelate, but of one who had abandoned the catholic doctrines and still claimed to maintain

his authority. The example of Truchses, if unresisted, was too inviting not to be certainly followed by other ecclesiastics. It also placed the laity catholic church in an extremely critical position, partly on account of the situation of the archiepiscopal states and partly from the predominancy the protestants would thereby gain in the electoral college. It was especially feared, as freedom of opinion was every day spreading rapidly, that Mayence would be the next to follow the example. Much, therefore, as Ghebhard and his friends endeavoured to represent his conduct as an individual case, which could draw after it no consequences, it was perfectly well known that many canons were avowed protestants, and that nothing would be easier than gradually to fill the chapter with their adherents, while a certainty would arise, that no catholic would ever again be elected.

These considerations would in any event have been serious, but would not have aroused such fierce and inveterate hostility to Ghebhard, had he not chosen this critical moment to marry. There is no doubt but that he was inclined at first, knowing he would be exposed to the attacks of his chapter, the emperor, the pope, and the whole catholic empire, to adopt the resolution of at once resigning and retiring altogether into private life. His declaration to Nuenar, on the day of his marriage, showed that such was his first impulse. But the hope of support from the protestants, who at that time disputed every privilege with their antagonists, an innate love of authority, which those who have long enjoyed it are so little able to resign, the example of many bishops and archbishops of the empire who had married with impunity, the persuasion of his protestant friends, particularly Nuenar and Kriechlingen, and, perhaps more than all, the feeling of what he owed to his beloved Agnes herself, triumphed over all objections and scruples, and fixed him to the determination of maintaining his archbishopric.

The state of feeling throughout the electorate at that time contributed, no doubt, to confirm him in this resolution. Devoted as were the burgomaster and council of Cologne to the catholic religion, the infection of the protestant doctrines had yet spread extensively among the people. Many citizens had already, some months previously, presented a petition to the emperor, that they might be allowed the free exercise of wor-

ship. They had obtained not further by this step than that the protestant princes, in a memorial of their own, strongly recommended their cause to the council. As this received no immediate answer, the palatine John of Zweibrucken had been commissioned to go personally to Cologne, and make representations in favour of the citizens. The council replied with much firmness, and was not to be prevailed on either by threats or persuasions to grant their demand. It nevertheless gave liberty to those who had been imprisoned for attending the sermons of protestant preachers; and, in consequence, the fanatic ranter Scragglekopft, alluded to in our early chapters, with others of his stamp, had been preparing for a rich harvest of heresy. The Elector Ghebhard, who wished nothing more ardently than to increase his party in the city, did not, even after the success of the revolt against his authority, give up all hope from that quarter. He flattered himself that the protestants, imitating the example of the inhabitants of Aachen, would, by the next session of the council, bring some of their own persuasion among them, or perhaps get the entire administration of the city into their hands by force. But, put on their guard by this example, the council redoubled its vigilance, and determined with so much the more zeal upon excluding the party of Ghebhard from the chapter.

Long, however, would the chapter itself have remained irresolute in this delicate affair, if the elector had not entirely thrown off the mask, and declared in a public rescript, almost immediately after his marriage, that, "as God had delivered him from the darkness of popery, he permitted to all his subjects the public exercise of the reformed religion." Upon this, the canons assembled together, and called out loudly for a diet at Cologne. And this not only took place, in spite of the active opposition of Ghebhard, but it was also unanimously resolved that the innovation introduced by the single authority of the elector was to be regarded as a measure, which he, without the consent and concurrence of the chapter and states, had no lawful competence to authorise. The states of the electoral lands of Westphalia did not, it is true, join in this resolution; on the contrary, they declared themselves formally for Ghebhard. Nevertheless, the affair took a much more serious turn than he had anticipated; for the emperor

and the pope began now to espouse the cause of the chapter with great warmth and energy.

The emperor, willing at the first instance either to compromise with Truchses, or to give a show of moderation to his conduct, had sent, as Ghebbard's defection from the church of Rome became flagrant, a member of his own privy council, to represent to him in the strongest manner the consequences which his conduct would produce; and as this measure remained without effect, the vice-chancellor of the empire, Jacob Kurtz, was despatched to Bonn with the same views. He prevailed as little with the elector as the former agent, but his presence worked powerfully on the chapter of Cologne, now left almost entirely to the control of the catholic members. The latter, imitating the example of Ghebbard who had garrisoned the city of Bonn, made also every warlike preparation, and got many places into their possession: and all this was not only approved of by Kurtz, but he advised them further, "before all things to think of a new election, for which the chapter was not only competent by their common right, but also by virtue of the ecclesiastical reservations in the religious peace; that nothing would more discourage Ghebbard and strengthen the party of the chapter than such a measure; and that this would be more particularly the case, if the election should fall on some potent prince." The pope, on his side, neglected nothing to bring the affair to an end. After he had without effect warned the elector, by a solemn admonitory letter, from his purpose, he declared him excommunicated as a public heretic, and deposed from the archbishopric of Cologne, with its appertaining titles, offices, and dignities. Hereupon the chapter proceeded to confirm the election, so hastily and illegally made in the first instance by the town council, of Ernest of Bavaria, bishop of Liege.

Nothing now remained to Ghebbard but the support of his new adherents, the protestant princes, nearly all of whom had given him hopes and promises, but none more than the palatine, John Casimir, so famous for his zeal in the reformed cause. This prince sent him word that he would hazard land and people, life and limb in his defence, and that he would recommend his cause in the most emphatic manner to all his relations and connections, to Queen Elizabeth, and to the protestant cantons of Switzerland. Three temporal electors also wrote to

the emperor in his favour, and immediately afterwards sent members of their respective privy councils to that imperial court, who declared in the names of their masters — “that Germany would be exposed to great danger if it should come to a war, on which many unquiet and discontented spirits had long reckoned ; that the Prince of Parma was already prepared and anxious to send troops out of the Netherlands to interfere in the quarrel, by which not only the Brabant war would be introduced into Germany, but such a mistrust would take place between the states of the empire that no one would know in what light he should regard his neighbour, or on what party he could rely in the fluctuations of a religious and civil contest ; that the emperor was informed of the ferments which had already arisen in the Imperial Diet, and that whatever party this diet might espouse, nothing could ensue but a civil war, confusion, devastation, and ruin.” The emperor was therefore prayed to be pleased to issue mandates, that foreign troops might be forbidden to violate the German territory, that both the elector and the chapter might refrain from all proceedings against each other, and especially that the latter might be obliged to restore to the elector whatever it had already taken from him.

The emperor replied that an assembly of electors and princes of both religions should be summoned to consider the matter, but that as the excommunication and deposition of the bishop — which regarded not his electoral and temporal, but merely his ecclesiastical dignities and offices — had already taken place ; and as the election, confirmation, and deposition of bishops did not belong to his prerogative, he must decline, as far as those questions were concerned, taking any part in a matter beyond his competence.

The most exasperating point to the protestants in this whole controversy was that the pope should have taken upon himself, by his sole authority, to depose and degrade so distinguished a hierarch who had espoused their doctrines. “It was,” they declared, “a thing unheard-of, and would form a most dangerous precedent, if the pope, without the knowledge of the emperor, or the concurrence of the other temporal and ecclesiastical electors, could, according to his pleasure, depose an elector from his dignity. The whole constitution of the empire would be thereby most sensibly weakened, and the pope

would acquire a power which he might employ to crush the emperor himself and all the other orders and members of the Germanic states."

It was, in fact, a prevalent opinion in former times, that a bishop deposed by the pope did not cease to be a prince of the empire, and that this last dignity could only be taken from him by the emperor and other states conjointly. We have the clearest example of this in the attempted depositions of the archbishops of Treves and Cologne by Pope Eugene IV. for their adherence to the Council of Basil. But the emperor Rudolph determined to confine himself within the provisions and articles of the religious peace, and to make these the rules of his conduct.

Rudolph was in no hurry to summon the promised assembly. He probably thought that the new archbishop, Ernest of Bavaria, who was making ample preparation for war, would soon drive Ghebhard out of the whole archbishopric, and thus make an end of the dispute. The other princes, the two electors, Augustus of Saxony, and John George of Brandenburg, the margrave Joachim Frederick of Brandenburg, the elector-palatine Louis, Duke Julius of Brunswick, Duke Ulrick of Mecklenburg, and the Duke of Wurtemberg, showed themselves much more indifferent than in the beginning it was thought they would. Ghebhard, rousing the whole energy of his nature for the struggle he had resolved on, despite the superstitious conviction of failure which from the first had oppressed him, strove in vain to excite their zeal and procure their active support. They seemed by no means disposed to render him any essential aid.

But, at about this time, Henry IV. of France sent an envoy, Pardillon de Segur, into Germany, not only to effect a closer union among the protestants, but also to exert himself among the German princes in favour of Ghebhard. "The whole of Germany, and a great part of Europe," said he, by this envoy, "have their eyes fixed on what is passing at Cologne. Should the contest terminate in the triumph of Ghebhard, all the well-disposed for the protestant religion would be encouraged thereby; but should the electoral dignity be trodden under foot by the pope, all brave hearts would lose their confidence, and other electors would be frightened from imitating the bold example which Ghebhard had given them; that another so

good an occasion of encountering the papacy and expelling it altogether from Germany might never again occur; and that the present opportunity must therefore be seized with all possible alacrity and diligence." It was, in fact, Henry's opinion that if the cause of Ghebbard could be maintained, no catholic, and especially no member of the House of Austria, would ever again mount the imperial throne.

These reasonings were excellent, but they produced no results. The Palatine John Casimir *alone* at last took the field with a newly-levied body of troops, and arrived, in spite of the imperial mandate, in the country of Cologne. It was his object to reduce this city to terms, at all hazards; but, although he twice visited the opposite market-town Duitz with fire and sword, he was unable to undertake anything further. Ghebbard was to have furnished him with money, ammunition, and provisions; but, baffled on all hands and being unable to do this effectually, John Casimir, after a few useless marches, quitted the country. His brother Louis, the elector-palatine, dying a short time after, and leaving him the guardianship of his children, and the administration of the electorate, a decent pretext was thus afforded him for abandoning the cause of Ghebbard altogether.

At about this time, the long-promised assembly, which consisted of deputies from Metz, Treves, Saxony, and Brandenburg, came to decisions so little in his favour, that even Saxony and Brandenburg advised him to resign his pretensions, and accept of a pension for life.

In the meantime the new Archbishop Ernest had collected troops from Bavaria under the command of his brothers, Duke William and Ferdinand; and at length Alexander Farnese, the great Prince of Parma, the general of Philip II.'s troops in the Low Countries, sent a reinforcement of 3500 men to the cause of bigotry, led by the Count of Aremberg. To cope with those assailants, Ghebbard raised bodies of recruits in Westphalia, in addition to the mercenaries who remained faithful to his cause as long as he had money to satisfy their cravings. Nuenar was the chief leader of his army in the field, while his brother Charles held firm the possession of Bonn, the stronghold of the elector's hopes. Several affairs took place in various quarters of the electorate; but it was soon demonstrated that the cause of Ghebbard was hopeless. One

by one, as has been stated, his friends dropped off from his support; nor did the more powerful potentates who might have most sympathised with him attempt anything effectual for his relief. The harsh and selfish Elizabeth of England was too remote as well as too callous to mix in a quarrel so foreign to her own interests. While Henry IV. of France, the prince who in many of his qualities most resembled our hero, found himself too deeply involved in domestic difficulties to venture a direct interference by arms in favour of the friend who excited so much of his sympathy.

Circumstances were too powerfully hostile to allow Truchses a chance of success. Of this he did not complain; for it has been seen he expected nothing better, and he had perhaps earlier submitted to inevitable fate, had he not been goaded on to the desperation of resistance by the abounding treacheries of many of those adherents he relied on most, who owed him large debts of gratitude and affection, and who at this crisis of his fortunes abandoned him, in all the tortuous varieties of sordid treachery. It took the most dissimulating and in some instances the most invidious forms. Insult in the shape of advice was offered on one hand, while affected compassion was the cloak for slander on the other. Every fault was magnified, every merit distorted. When the vulgar have once broken from him whom in prosperity they cringed to and fawned on, their persecution is proportionably vile. When they have a really well-founded reproach to make, no mercy is shown. When there is no just cause, they invent. And if they are too cowardly or too dull to do that, they insinuate and hint, say nothing positive, imply much — and, taking a merit for forbearance, absolutely cheat the world out of an approbation for their reserve, which is in fact a meanness more base than direct calumny. How many a reputation has been shrugged, and winked, and hemmed-and-hawed away!

The congress, though not going the absolute length of Ghebhard's persecutors, proved themselves so decidedly hostile to his cause that those among his first abettors who even yet kept up a show of attachment to him, now haughtily insisted that he should resign his claims, and accept of an imperial pension for his life. This proposal he peremptorily refused. Even with a certainty of ruin he scorned a com-

promise, the terms of which bore attaint to his honour. There is a glorious obstinacy in man's nature that revolts against dictation. Even when philosophy whispers submission, pride vociferates resistance; for the proud man will rather die than yield to bullying, even in a cause which conscience tells him to be unjust. This is not reason, perhaps, but it is human nature. We are only stating a failing, not defending a fault. Nor is it to be understood that our hero came within the sweep of the censure it may merit. He believed himself to be in the right. The reader may speculate on what had been his probable course, supposing him to have felt otherwise.

The latest struggles of Ghebbard Truchses against his hard destiny were the most vigorous. Every attack from his open enemies, every defection of his false friends, were met by some new effort of ingenuity and courage; and he would probably have gone on in single-handed resistance till he dropped dead in the contest, had not one of those unpropitious events, which happened in all the simplicity of accidental occurrence been at once magnified by his superstition into a direct omen from heaven, decisive of his ruin. Against it, reason, philosophy, and fortitude, were as sand before the desert blast. Conviction in an invincible ill-luck paralysed the whole moral force of the man, and scattered the remnant of his withering hopes. His last and only chance of holding out, till by some possible turn of fate the political state of Europe might replace him in his almost lost possessions, was in the firmness of his brother Charles and the fidelity of the garrison of Bonn, which  had so long and so ably commanded. The communication between that city and the elector's castle of Godesberg, on the same side of the Rhine, was constantly kept open, Ghebbard's residence having been for some time fixed in the latter beautiful retreat, whence he not only commanded a free intercourse with his capital and the district still his own on the left bank of the river, but from the towers and terraces of which their mistress—she so long lost to the wide world, yet happy to find one of her own in those restricted limits—could send forth her anxious looks, to repose on the not distant beauties of the seven mountains, and to span the glorious stream which separated her from their romantic solitudes.

The elector made constant visits, during the intervals from

active operations, to his now wavering capital, to encourage the soldiery, and by every effort of ingenuity uphold the almost worn-out fidelity of the citizens. The Bavarian troops were now preparing to lay regular siege to Bonn. They had taken up a position at the opposite side of the Rhine, and a constant cannonade was interchanged between the batteries from either bank. It was a matter of great risk to venture between Godesberg and Bonn; but the elector's visits at this crisis were more frequent than ever, for an example of courage and activity was more than ever necessary. One morning he had ridden through a heavy fire along the river's side, and safely entered the small house in the suburbs where his brother Charles had taken up his quarters the previous day, for the better superintendence of the works going on; and where, fatigued by a night of anxiety and exertion, he reposed on a couch, while against the wall close beside, his sword hung suspended in his studded baldrick.

"Ha, Ghebhard!" exclaimed he, half raising himself up. "Welcome, and well come, my brother! I wanted thy counsel in respect to those new batteries, and the construction of the rafts for attacking the enemy's works. Thou must have encountered sore chances of mishap on the way. There was no dust to cover thee thus, if a Bavarian bullet had not ploughed the road close by. Was it so?"

"Why yes, in truth, an uncivil shot did rake the earth below, while another lopped the elm branches above me, so near, that had my mitre held place of this close casque, I do believe its tip at least had been taken off."

"Thou wouldst not have liked the omen, Ghebhard, eh? Or say, have the manifold wild chances of late years taught thee the little worth of signs and tokens?"

"The experience of late years, Charles, has taught me a low estimate of man, but in nothing shaken my high views of Heaven. No hint of prophecy or supernatural sign is now required to warn me of the little worth of human nature. Yet should Heaven condescend to hold forth manifest marks by which life's voyage may be steered, such as on more than one occasion have already been vouchsafed to me, I am as open to their influence as ever I was."

"Alas, my brother, the times and late events are rife with such. When enemies close in on us and friends drop off,

when the ranks are broken and the battle lost, no ominous portent is needed to tell us of our fate!"

"Thou, Charles, seest fate with a soldier's eye, and meetest it foot to foot, and hand to hand. With thee it walks the earth in an incarnate form. I seek for it in heaven. It is to me a spirit of the skies, seen in a high remoteness, manifest in stars and meteors, walking the winds, careering o'er the seas, enwrapped in clouds, glittering in sunbeams, whispering to man in dreams, meeting his thoughts on their soul-searching path, and startling them with flashes of conviction. Or it is visible at times in accidental things, unlooked for, out of calculation, in themselves trifles, bubbles that burst in nothingness on the broad air, but even in the drop that forms them holding the essence of eternal truth, wisdom's sure oracle for those who can propound it. Such has been, such is, my notion of destiny—thus I will read it and abide by it."

"And long may Heaven grant thy noble nature fair hope of happiness!" exclaimed Charles, seizing his brother's hand, and pressing it affectionately between his own. "By God's thunder it is almost as glorious as a well-won fight to mark the enthusiasm of thy genius, even when one feels it goes too far and too fast! My noble brother, how I love thee! How proud I am of thy talents, how thy eloquence thrills through me, as though it were a part of myself! I am cast in a ruder mould—I know not the nice touches of fine fancy. My nerves are sluggish, and not easily set tingling. I look on a shooting star or blazing comet as of less moment to the world's fate than a bullet sent from a cannon's fiery throat. But I am all alive to your fine qualities of head and heart. I never fawned on nor flattered your prosperity, Ghebbard; but now in these sad times of trial, I am thine, my brother, body and soul, for life or death—and may God forsake me the day that I abandon thee!"

The honest soldier, overpowered by sudden emotion, let his head sink back on the rolled-up cloak which served for a pillow, and he covered his face with both hands. Ghebbard, deeply affected, but commanding his feelings, replied,

"While thou art spared to me, my gallant brother, with *her*, my heart's hope, the balm of my soul's wounds—I am well, too well repaid for all the paltry losses of life. No, Charles, thou art not of those who load with flattery him

whom they would deceive, like the reptile which slavers over before swallowing its prey. Thou ever stood'st aloof till the hour of danger came upon me, and grievous it is to me that the hazard of my fortunes is all that is left to recompense thee for all the advantages of trust and power, flung at the emperor's feet, to leave thee free to follow a cause where nought could pay the sacrifice."

"Yes, Ghebhard, yes, there was and is great honour and much glory to be gained—and I have gained it. To bear thee up against thy foes—to give thy slanderers the lie—to smite thy enemies—to conquer with thee if I can, to die defending thee, if it must be so, to share thy fate of good or ill, that be my recompense—I scorn all other!"

A fast embrace followed these words. The holiest spirit of brotherhood inspired the manly pair. Ghebhard was the first to speak.

"This pays me for all ills—I am now quits with the world! With thy arm, Charles, to fight for me, I may conquer—with thy heart to feel with me, I must triumph. All will be well! As long as thy good sword is wielded in my cause, I am invincible!"

As Ghebhard uttered these words, he fixed his eyes on the rapier hanging on its nail before him; and at the moment he ceased speaking, a chance bullet from one of the enemy's batteries struck the house, burst through the frail wall, and, passing over Ghebhard's head where he sat, cut the baldrick right across, and the rapier fell clattering on the floor, with a cloud of dust shaken from the stone and mortar where the round-shot made its lodgment.

The brothers started up. Charles, a true soldier, sprang to seize his fallen sword. Ghebhard stood transfixed; and when the former turned to mark if he was quite safe from this untoward interruption, he saw him, pale, his eyes wild staring, his mouth half open, every feature of his expressive face showing the condensed suffering which had seized and cramped his heart. Charles knew well the mixed strength and weakness of his brother's character. He felt that a word in his present state of feeling would be intolerable to him. He therefore stood silent till the crisis passed over. He watched intently the returning colour stealing to Ghebhard's cheeks, his eyes recovering their wonted softness, the rigid

attitude gradually relaxing. He then cautiously took one of his hands in his, and looked full in his face, without even then venturing to speak to him. Ghebhard felt the whole process of his brother's assiduous delicacy, as much as if it had been eloquently spoken. He embraced him tenderly; and, in such tones of solemn seriousness as always accompanied his feelings of superstitious awe, he said,

"God bless and protect thee, my dear brother, and grant we may meet again — that this said foretelling of my ruin may not involve thee in my fate! I must hasten to Godesberg — *that* is now my post — I leave everything to thy dauntless energy — farewell!"

Charles replied not. He was quite overcome by the solemnity of his brother's despairing yet heroic aspect, words, and voice. In a few minutes more, Ghebhard was again on horseback, and on his road to the river's side towards Godesberg; indifferent to the bullets, which at intervals passed almost as near to him as those which he had already miraculously escaped on that eventful morning.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FAR-LOOKING from one of the castle-turrets, Agnes had, as usual, taken her station, to watch for the return of her husband; and long before the expected hour for his arrival, her anxiety told her that the time was near at hand. The dull reverberations sweeping up the river spoke in each successive sound of the dangers which Ghebhard might be exposed to, and the awful proofs of the near neighbourhood of war had never before sounded so frequently or so awfully on her ear, nor been so sadly echoed in her heart. She at length saw him approach — slowly, but safely. She flew from the casemate of the tower, that solitary tower, which still remains to mark the site of her first years of wedded life, and she was quickly out from its low postern, and half way down the low mound it stands on, to receive into her open arms him for whose dispersed and shattered thoughts her breast was the sure haven.

Struck by the unwonted seriousness of his looks, which not even the beams of her glowing countenance could light up, the dread of some positive calamity kept her for a moment dumb. But, recovering herself, she exclaimed,

"Tell it to me, my beloved, fearlessly and at once. I am long prepared for all ill news — but none can be fatal, since thou art back with me again. What has happened? Is our dear Charles safe?"

"Heaven grant! I left him well and unharmed not an hour past. No, my own Agnes — my own! thou art still mine own, mine only, wholly, and for ever! Yes, it is so — and being thus, is aught else on earth save that invaluable brother worth a thought? No, my Agnes, no positive mischief has happened to-day, nought that to vulgar eyes or usual feelings might give evidence of harm. But I have marked a sign and token of ill-luck, as surely as the carousing king of old saw the fiery writing on the wall. The days of my power are numbered, and its final extinction is at hand. Those of my happiness are but beginning; for to love thee rightly, to possess thee thoroughly, I must be left destitute of all but thy incomparable virtue, thy magic beauty, thy abounding wisdom. And soon, my Agnes, will those treasures be my sole possession. O God, how much more worth than all the rest!"

"Come in, my best beloved, come in and rest and refresh thyself — then thou wilt tell me thy adventure, which may promise good instead of ill. Omens may have two meanings, and thou art not prone to see the dark side of things."

"The broad glare of day never wears night's blackness, my own Agnes; nor do signs of ill borrow the sun's brightness. *They* have but one colour, and the more sanguine my mind on general events, the more sure my perception of each token of mishap."

"Well then, my Ghebhard, let the mischief come, and let us meet it bravely, be it what it may! I am too long prepared, too long expectant for the worse, to be taken by surprise or in default of courage. Come in, come in!"

It was thus that Agnes was wont to yield to her husband's weaknesses, and to turn them into strength; letting the first impression work uncontradicted, or but slightly checked by some neutralising remark, and finally turned into a different

channel. He folded his arms round her waist, and was entering with her the low portal which led to her private apartments, when one of the officers who attended him from the lower terrace on the courtyard, where he had alighted from his horse, advanced, and said that a messenger who had just passed the drawbridge demanded in all haste to communicate news from Count Nuenar.

"Bad news," replied Ghebhard, in a prophetic tone.

"I fear it will prove so, for it is the first time I have heard your highness forbode ill since the day the war began."

"I felt, though I refrained from foreboding it, and I now only echo the croaking voice of destiny, my worthy follower. Let the messenger advance! Well, good sir," continued Ghebhard, as the dust-covered officer approached, his countenance betraying his intelligence, "Count Nuenar is defeated?"

"Alas, your highness, yes! — utterly defeated by Duke William of Bavaria."

"Not slain?"

"No, he yet lives, and was even unhurt when I left the fatal field close by the Isselt's banks."

"Heaven be praised! for he has stood well and gallantly to my cause when almost all the rest dropped off; and he may now abandon it with honour. Captain, you will find good cheer, though there be small comfort in that now, at the hands of my household officers. I will see you anon, to learn the details of your message — you have told me a sad text on which to preach a sermon of serious thought."

"How changed his highness is!" observed the captain, as the elector retired. "I remember a far different reception to this for him who brought the news of the fight of Wachenheim, two months back. The elector then cried 'victory!' before he heard the word 'defeat,' and his questions came so fast and open-mouthed, as to din my comrade Captain Kleinsmit, while his eye caught, as it were, each answer ere it left the man's brain. Say, gentlemen, what has come over his highness to transform him thus?"

The courtiers gave nothing but shrugs and gestures of entire ignorance to the blunt soldier's inquiries; and at best but a loose-dropped monosyllable to those which followed, as they repaired to the chamber where he was told to await the elector's summons. While he learned this lesson of courtly

caution, and marvelled much at the overstrained air of haughty condescension which was worn by every one around him—it was his first visit to the ante-room of a palace—Ghebbard and Agnes had reached the retired apartments occupied by her, and commanding that extensive view of nature's loveliness before alluded to. Once there, and quite shut out from the observation of his retainers, he spoke without reserve; and slightly glancing at the news of Nuenar's defeat, which seemed scarcely to affect, and by no means to surprise him, he related to Agnes the event of the morning relative to his brother's sword.

"And thou readest in this accident a prognostic of ill?" said Agnes.

"By God's truth, ay! or methinks, my Agnes, I must have lost all power of reading," replied Ghebbard, with an astonished look at the doubt implied in the question.

"Thou mayest be right, fatally right," returned Agnes; "but it seems to me as though the weapon was struck from its idle place by that chance shot, in warning that it should be grasped firmly in thy brave brother's hand, and turned in active energy against the foe."

"I wish Charles had taken it thus!" said Truchses, with a thoughtful air, "but he despises omens altogether—or good or ill, they neither help nor harm him."

"Would that thou mightest take them thus!" said Agnes, in a tone of affectionate but quite unreproachful sincerity.

"I could not, even if I would," replied Truchses. "From earliest life my feelings have chimed in with the prevalent belief. My childhood was nurtured in romance; and as I grew in years and intellect those early impressions became a part of me. Without the poetry of thought—for such is superstition—I had been nothing, or worse than nothing, a mortal clod doing life's functions, but without life's grace or dignity. I had suffered less perhaps, but I had enjoyed nothing. The world had been to me a commonplace probation, instead of what I feel God meant it for, a scene of ever-new delight. Imagination gilding fact embellishes what is coarse, ennobles what is refined. Even if it cheats us with ideal excellence, it is all to our own good. Better to revel in bright delusion than rot in dull reality! How beautiful to believe in providential signs, and see them act for individual

objects! How elevating to man's nature to feel that he is tended by a world of beings, purer than thought can frame a notion of,—to think that the beacon-lights of heaven are linked to us by an ethereal essence, formed of myriad millions of bright rays filling the empyrean, which *seems* space, but is one vast connection between earth and sky. Oh, Agnes! I have gazed upon that host of living fires at times until my senses reeled in delirious wonder. I have seen those stars dance in wild mazes; have thought that they poured down on me a diamond shower; again, that they flew upwards like sparks from some burning mass; ay, that, uplifted from the solid earth, I moved on viewless wings to mingle with their splendours—Ah! thanks for this kind hint. I lose myself in thought, and tire thee with my rhapsody?"

"No, no, go on!" said Agnes, with a plaintive smile, and pressing the hand into which she had softly slipped one of hers, whose gentle touch had brought her enthusiast husband back from his far flight—"Go on; thou knowest I love to hear thee thus, to mark thee, half inspired, borne far above mere mortal feelings."

"Yet still, mine own one, instantly lured back by thy timid touch. Oh, Agnes, this *is* heaven on earth! for at such times I know not which to think it, mere human happiness or immortal bliss."

"Then may I not be satisfied, even when thy lofty fancy bears thee away, and seems o'er dazzled by the beam it soars to meet? I am, I am, my husband!"

"Thou mayst indeed be so, my Agnes, if my deep love is worth thy having."

"If!"

"I know all that is comprised in that eloquent word, my best and dearest! and thus I answer it," said the anxious elector, tenderly embracing his wife. "Yes," continued he, as he held her close to him, and gazed fervidly into her blushing face, "it was to this temperament, so warm, so fancy-fraught, that was owing the first enchantment that led me to adore thee. Had I not believed in destiny, I had not listened to the arch-devil who worked so hard for my happiness, while he only meant my ruin—I had not rushed into that passion which lives to-day, more ardent than when, after my first sight of thee, I left the little heart, enclosed in

the fanciful case, which has been ever since worn next thy own."

"Not ever since that night, only since thy confession told me whence it came, and that I knew it for a sure emblem of thine."

"That discovery followed quick upon our first meeting—I lost no time in wooing, Agnes. Say, hast thou never marvelled at the rapid course of our attachment? never felt it was too sudden and too soon complete? And art thou satisfied indeed, my own Agnes, with the fate I have brought on thee? Wilt thou not murmur and repent when ruin stares us still closer in the face, and we are driven out at length on the wide world, desolate, friendless, and forsaken?"

"Oh, stop—this is blasphemy against love's holiness—and most harsh injustice to thyself. And dost thou think so meanly of thy power as to believe it can be shaken by those adverse winds? so lightly of me, as to believe me capable of change? No, my beloved, *thou* art my all, as I know myself to be thine—our fate is the same—and we will run our course, *together* it cannot be said—for we are now but one in interests, feelings, and fortune."

"My admirable wife! in every ill my support, in all good my inspiration! Was I not right in my rapid choice of thee? was not fate kind to me? ought not Scotus to be canonised as my tutelar saint rather than loathed as a fiend? Let all the rest of the world fling curses on the river's bosom, to keep down his hated spirit where his base body sank, but let me laud his memory, for he was the beacon to light me to thy charms, the pilot to guide me on in their pursuit."

"Let the wretch be disremembered wholly, nor think Heaven works its purposes of good by such vile instruments. The association thou wouldst establish is dishonouring to a being like thee. And it is my repugnance to mark thee so willing to mix thy fate with ignoble things, or trifling accidents, that makes me wish thou wert as Charles is, free from the superstition which, though brilliantly colouring thy general character, taints it at times too broadly!"

"'Tis thus, and almost only thus, we differ, my Agnes. Thou seest in trifling and mean causes only trifles and meanness. I mark them often as the manifestations of glorious purposes—as when the electoral scutcheon fell on my

canon's cap and told me my high destiny—and oftener, alas! of late, as signs of deep and desperate mishap. Am I not justified in my forebodings this day by the sad news of Nuenar's defeat? But that, I fear, is nought to what will surely come. The approaching shadow of some mighty mischief falls broadly o'er my spirit—I see it coming, but I shrink not. I am ready for my avoidless doom; and did it not equally involve thee, Agnes, I could rush into ruin with the fervour of a martyr plunging into flames!”

“There can be no ruin for either of us, my husband, while this mutual affection lasts. Nor does worldly ill contain one terror for me, but the possible chance of losing thy love.”

“That is *not* possible while reason lives; the very thought of it makes me shudder, for ere thou couldst cease to reign as at present in my heart reason must quit my brain. Oh, Agnes, I have loved thee largely but not madly—to cease to love thee as I do were indeed madness, for art thou not to me every thing! Are not thy solid judgment and firm virtue the ballast that keeps steady our life-bark on its stormy course, while my more buoyant energy forms the sails? Are we not well mated? Could any other living woman have suited me a thousandth part so well? How well hast thou borne my foibles! Hast thou ever looked a reproach, or thwarted one wayward wish which might lead me at times astray? Oh, never, never! Then must I love thee till my heart's pulses cease to throb; for the strong instinct of my own happiness is confirmed and sanctified by reason, reflection, and experience.”

* * * * *

Such scenes as these were of frequent occurrence between Ghebhard Truchses and his wife, during the course of the four years which had elapsed since the more busy details of our story already presented to the reader. The whole progress of their wedded intercourse had been an increase of affection on both sides, and of passionate delight on his. The impetuous ardour of his character reposed at times, but was never weakened, like some vessel that is for awhile inert in harbour, but is ever ready to rush out before the winds into the open seas again. The rapidity of the double conquest which Ghebhard and Agnes had made of each other had, without doubt, carried each too quickly on to allow sufficient time for either to examine calmly and judge certainly of the other's character, or

to calculate with precision their mutual chances of happiness. It was decidedly a lottery in which they ventured ; and they had amazing good luck to have both drawn prizes.

But, after all, a few weeks or months more or less of courtship is of small matter, if love be really the inspiration and not mere worldly interests. In all affairs of feeling very much depends on chance. A man in love is never for the time seen in his real aspect. It is the nature of that master-passion to subdue all others ; and it is the necessity of nature, not hypocrisy, that makes the enamoured suitor appear more amiable and generous, less violent and selfish than he really is. And when after marriage he returns to his true character, women too often make small allowance for their own influence before it, and visit too harshly the sins they discover, in the belief that they were unfairly and treacherously concealed. If men see too much in their mistresses, women expect too much from husbands. It is rarely that a man finds after marriage more charms than he imagined when wooing ; for the great majority of women are impelled by the desire, neither affected nor unamiable, of displaying their advantages to their lovers. But when a husband does find in his wife qualities of mind that he either overlooked or did not seek for in his courtship, when his chief object was to show his own merits, not to draw out hers, his astonishment is not greater than his delight. He had loved her before for his own sake, he now values her for hers. The selfishness of passion is softened down and sublimed. And as for the great tie of personal attraction, which possession is supposed to loosen, there must be a sad deficiency of sentiment in man or of delicacy in woman when anything but the gradual decay of nature causes that to cease. Female beauty is in itself of long duration, and the charms which we gaze on daily fade so imperceptibly that their decline is scarcely visible. Even the sunset of passion has abounding delights, for those who revel in love's warmth rather than in its fire.

Whatever may be the general case, Ghebbard Truchses loved his wife better in all ways the longer he knew her ; and if he was an exception, it is to be hoped there are many others to be found even now. There was something in the character of Agnes, and that something supremely good, which required the marriage state to develop it thoroughly. She had less vanity and less selfishness than almost any one. She never

fancied herself of importance to others, and possessed none literally in her own eyes, until she found that she was united indissolubly to another, and that reason and feeling combined to prove to her that his interest and her own were as one. For him, then, for his fame, his honour, his welfare, she grew proud, and to promote his good she was ready for all efforts, though she had despised every exertion for her own. Had she never married she had been the most indolent of women, not from the want of mental activity, but from the absence of personal desires. She was fond of pleasing others, from benevolence rather than vanity. She was more fearful of dispraise than ambitious of display. But a cautiousness of temperament which prompted to retirement led to a partial veiling of her character, which gave an air of indifference to what was in fact but an excess of modesty. This excess, like all others, even of virtue, was a defect; and perhaps in her peculiar case an unfortunate one. More confidence had given more energy; and she might then have actively aided the struggle which her husband was thrown into. But though she upheld him by her counsel and consoled him by her sympathy, she despised the worldliness of the objects for which he contended, too much to let her be much more than a passive support, against which his ardent and at times exhausted spirit leaned. But it was in this negative capacity that she performed her share in the great drama of his fate, and it is in this aspect that she was as yet a heroine. That title is more commonly accorded to those only who bustle and battle through the world. A great injustice! For many a being of calm temperament and unobtrusive conduct is at once the inspiration and the sustenance of acts, which but for them would not be heroism. And such was Agnes de Mansfelt, and such her conduct for four years of a struggle in which her gallant husband was like the foam on the tossed waters, and she as the far down spring which caused their eternal heave.

The principal portion of those four years was passed in the sumptuous retirement of Godesberg, where after their marriage the elector and his wife fixed their almost constant residence; the impolicy of a public avowal making Agnes insist on Ghebbard restraining his impetuous desire to proclaim his union in defiance of the world. It was, however, known too well to be at all doubtful; and his enemies acted as completely on the

excuse it gave for their hostility, as though the elector had officially announced it to every court of Europe.

Never did two beings live more thoroughly in and for each other than did Ghebbard and Agnes from the moment they became one. The influence that each at once obtained they kept in daily increasing security. With her it was a concentration of all feeling, which, without weakening her benevolent regard for human nature in general, totally absorbed every individual sentiment. She was amply capable of devoted love, but her heart contained only one chamber, and that could hold but one tenant. Truchses was differently organised. He had the power of loving—of largely and sincerely loving—in different degrees, and various persons. *His* heart was honeycombed, and each separate cell was redolent of affection. But as one by one his various attachments were worn out by time, or trampled out by treachery, the place they had occupied was successively filled by some offshoot from that flower of conjugal delight so deeply rooted in his soul. The constant activity which urged him on to variety of pursuits, and which threw him into continual contact with new scenes and new persons, tried to the utmost, and secured the complete triumph of the great experiment he had ventured on. Every new absence brought him back to his wife, more impassioned, more tender than the last. The irritability of his temper became softened down, the pulse of his ambition throbbed gentler and gentler, he in all things became a better without in any becoming a less brilliant man. Other heroines have had the merit of urging their lovers to triumph gracefully over ill; Agnes de Mansfelt's was that of teaching her husband to bear ruin with dignity.

And here is the place to briefly mention the fate of some other persons, more prominent in the opening than in this period of our story.

The unfortunate Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, recovered almost by miracle from the attempt on her life, and completely cleared of every criminal charge by the testimony of her preservers, was thoroughly reinstated in her husband's confidence. But the imprudence of her connection with Scotus, and the notoriety of the scene with Leckenstein, seemed to call for some admonitory system towards her, that, though not exactly punishment, was something stronger than reproof. She was consequently, and quite with her own consent, placed in a separate

residence, in her husband's dominions, and close to the seat of his sovereign power, where, freed from the embarrassing honours of dominion, for which nature, her own tastes, and preceding circumstances all marked her to be unfitted, she lived in a well-watched privacy, which historians may be amply justified in designating an imprisonment.

Von Leckenstein, whose wounds were healed and whose health restored under the care of his relatives, met with a more rigorous fate. The barbarous system of international law, which in those days allowed one despot to play into the hands of another, for their common purposes of tyranny, offered, of course, no restraint to the views of princes, who only sought and demanded what appeared but rigorous justice against a foreign offender. The unhappy Ulrick was, therefore, seized and carried off by the orders of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, as guilty of a passion for a sovereign princess, with but slight remonstrance on the part of the Elector of Cologne, who admitted the heinousness of the offence against his brother sovereign's dignity and honour; and whose intercession on the score of the culprit's youth, the failure of his designs, and the sufferings he had already undergone, only procured an alleviation of the horrors of the duration to which he was doomed for the remainder of his life. This was a hard fate for a young, and by no means guilty man, whose worst fault had been to suffer vanity to lead him astray from his allegiance to the girl he loved and who loved him.

Poor Fredolinda, deeply hurt by the evident inconstancy of her ambitious cousin, had, long even before the catastrophe already related, and which proclaimed his daring passion for the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg to the world, felt all the torments of slighted affection. She was one of those sensitive creations of which the passions make their sport, without judgment sufficient to restrain her enthusiasm. Jealousy is the almost spontaneous growth of such a mind; and it no sooner became evident in poor Freda, than it sprang into complete development, like the poisonous weed that bursts, fully leaved, from the earth. Yet, in all her anguish, this fine-hearted girl was true to her character of generous affection. She tended her wounded cousin with complete devotion; nor did she shrink from this harassing duty, even when she heard him in his delirium rave wildly of the rival beauty, for whose form he

mistook that of the pale and weeping maiden, thus self-doomed to moral martyrdom. This was a hard trial. Freda bore it, and bore it well; but her fortitude arose from the inspiration of a feeling more absorbing, more elevating, and more consoling than even love itself. It was religious fervour that had completely seized on her mind, and held her in its exciting thrall. Enough was seen of her disposition at the opening scene of this story, to show that all her fancies chimed with the elaborate pomps of the Roman Catholic worship. And fortunate it was for her innocent heart that such vanities had power to at once control and console it. How far better to live pure and happy, the votary of a delusion, than linger on, the victim of a feeling formed of realities of suffering, and a vague notion of enjoyments she was not doomed to experience, even had she known how to value them. Left almost entirely to herself, in consequence of her father's constant absence in the duties of his command in the electoral army, Freda found no obstacle to the accomplishment of the design she executed almost as soon as it was formed; and the cold bigotry of a nunnery received in its retreat the lovely convert, who, in renouncing heresy, hoped to secure happiness, and who fled from the visible glare of suffering to the sombre depths of seclusion.

Emma took a brighter, and, after all, a better course. She recovered in time from the dangerous impression which the insidious Italian had laboured to effect; and lucky it was for her that his hands and his head were too full to allow of his following up his half-formed designs against her. Freed from the bane of his flatteries, and alive to the sense of his discovered infamy, she rejoiced in her escape; and it was just at the moment when her heart, having learned its own susceptibility, became aware of its wants, that young Christopher de Mansfelt, handsome, gay, and graceful, offered himself to her affection, and was promptly and candidly accepted. A residence at Godesberg with her kinswoman, the electress, became a matter of course. There she became established, the friend and confidant of Agnes; and Christopher did not fail to add his presence to the delights of that elegant retreat, whenever his absence from camp or garrison was possible, and waiting until more favourable prospects than had yet arisen on him since his entrance into the elector's service,

might enable him to join his destiny to hers, without fear of a combination of encumbrance too great for either to support.

Ernest de Mansfelt, having no relish for his brother's perilous career, had accepted an offer from Frederick II., king of Denmark, and had entered his service as his secret and confidential counsellor.

The old Baroness of Kriechlingen had, as well as her daughter Emma, found refuge at Godesberg, from the harassing vicissitudes to which her intrepid husband was exposed, either during his active service in the field, or as commandant of some of those strong places which still held firm in their allegiance to Ghebbard Truchses. At the period to which our story has now reached he was stationed at Bonn, commanding that garrison, as second to Charles Truchses, and doomed to share the fate which befel the latter, within two hours of the ominous accident, which to Ghebbard's predisposed mind foreboded calamity, and which was certainly coincident with it in an overwhelming degree.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was during the time occupied by the elector and his wife in the conversation detailed in the last chapter, and within two hours of Ghebbard's departure from his brother's quarters, that a long-planned conspiracy, quickly converted into a general mutiny, broke out in the city of Bonn. The mercenaries being first gained over by the agents of the Duke of Bavaria, the garrisons took advantage of the temporary absence of the chief commander from within the walls, suddenly rose up and overpowered the native troops, whose fidelity to the elector was proof against the bribes and other seductions of the enemy. Baron Kriechlingen, lion-hearted but not lynx-eyed, was quite incapable of coping with the cunning contrivers of a plot; and before his valour had time to be brought into play, to repress the revolt, his person was seized and placed in close confinement, together with the other principal officers left with him in the city. On the first alarm which reached the suburb head-quarters of the gallant Charles

Truchses, he sprang forth to meet, and he hoped to suppress the mutineers. But their measures were taken with too sure a calculation. He was instantly surrounded and disarmed ; the few followers who attempted his rescue were cut down ; and he was conveyed a prisoner to the dungeons of the castle fortress, where he had erewhile commanded as a prince.

The surprised and stupified citizens had no course but submission, let their predilections be what they might ; but there is so much fickleness and selfishness in a town mob, of all countries and all times, that it was hard to distinguish the truth from the falsehood in the shouts with which the rabble of Bonn welcomed the army of Ernest of Bavaria, which soon made its triumphant entrance into the widely opened gates. Pretty nearly a repetition of the scenes which were acted at Cologne a few years before now took place in the capital ; and the adherents of Ghebbard, given up to total despair, were fain to accept the best terms of compromise offered by their victorious foes.

Ghebbard Truchses was now fairly at bay, for soon the rushing pack of rabblement had swept along the road from Bonn to Godesberg, yelling in a chorus of terrific discord. The sound was not to be mistaken ; and the quick eyes of the household soon discerned the confirmation of their fears, in the motley crowd of military and burgher assailants which hurried on to the assault of the castle, which, not being fortified, and only provided with a few pieces of cannon for mere purposes of parade, was incapable of making almost any resistance against a serious attack. But one or two partisans of the elector, who had succeeded in escaping from Bonn, arrived at Godesberg just time enough to break the ill news, and allow the household to take measures for checking the first impulse of an assault.

Ghebbard and Agnes heard at the same moment, but with far different sensations, the heralding sounds of their utter ruin. He, with an expression of voice and look that might be almost imagined to arise from a morbid satisfaction at the announced accomplishment of his superstitious belief, exclaimed, —

“ The hour is come — these are, indeed, the sounds of fate. Thank Heaven, that I can meet it thus ! ”

And, as he spoke, he enfolded his wife in an impassioned

embrace. But she, with the electric promptness of woman's fear for the safety of him she loves, sprang away from his encircling arms, and rushed towards a window, to see the nature and the extent of the danger she too surely felt to be at hand. At this moment, Walram, the still constant attendant of his master, entered the apartment, in visible consternation, and stammered out some indistinct announcement of the peril.

"Who is the superior officer in waiting?" asked the elector, with great coolness.

"Colonel Von Heyen, please your highness. He is in the ante-room—shall I summon him to your highness's presence? I think he is the very man for this desperate crisis. What a fearful yell!" exclaimed the affrighted valet.

"Yes," soliloquised the elector, aloud; "danger does level distinctions, and fear make men bold! This, Walram, is the first time for twenty years or more that I have ever known thee to have an opinion or venture to confess that thou couldst think. But never mind; it is but just that I should agree in thy opinion now—thou hast never yet differed from mine. Let Colonel Von Heyen attend me!"

In the few minutes which elapsed before the colonel appeared, with Emma Von Kriechlingen, other ladies and some household officers, who rushed in promiscuously, Agnes stood in deep silence, regarding with fixed look the wondrous calm, the impassable composure with which her husband sat, listening to the increased vociferations of the assailants without, and gazing on the various modifications in which alarm and terror acted on the groups before him, while rumours of ill poured rapidly in. But those moments were not lost for Agnes. In that brief space she read deep and far into her husband's mind, and into the futurity of feeling, if not of events, which now opened out before both him and her. A few minutes produced in her a change that years might have been thought insufficient for. Her whole character underwent one of those miraculous transformations that are more like the phenomena of physical than moral nature. The calm, reflective, negative qualities by which she had before been distinguished, were from this instant altered into the positive and energetic combination which had been hitherto as foreign from her disposition, as it had until then formed the characteristics of him who seemed suddenly to have utterly lost it.

He was like some noble courser which had long shown vigour and courage of the finest stamp, but which suddenly breaks down at the very crisis when perseverance is more than ever necessary to make him reach the goal.

"Well, Gaspar," said Truchses, as the gallant young colonel stood before him, a picture of stern valour and devoted fidelity; "so we are at length beset in our last lair! What is the extent of this ill news, and of our present danger?"

"There are no bounds to either, your highness. It all amounts to total ruin. The castle will be presently assailed at all sides, and there is not the least hope of holding out half an hour against a bold attack."

"Are my brother and Baron Kriechlingen indeed made prisoners at Bonn?"

"It is true, your highness, and with them Count Christopher de Mansfelt and——"

A hysteric scream from Emma broke the sentence; and while Agnes and the other females hastened to aid in composing the afflicted girl, Von Heyen briefly confirmed the reports already hastily made by Walram and others.

"Then since it is indeed thus," said Ghebhard, "since destruction is unavoidable and resistance vain, we have but to meet our fate with dignity. You are ready, Von Heyen, to obey my orders?"

Von Heyen hesitated a moment, for he could not quite comprehend the expression of the elector's voice and looks.

"I have hitherto lived but to obey your highness," said he, after a pause.

"Then, my orders now are that you throw wide the castle-gates, and let the enemy enter; and that you do not suffer an arm to be raised, or a life perilled for the vain object of protracting the fate of me and mine. Since Heaven abandons us, we may well give up hope. Let all who hear me take their own parts, and make what conditions they may. I have no further power for others' service or my own."

At these gloomy words, the crowded room showed specimens of despair in all its symptoms of weakness and of strength. Nor were those displays confined in their separate developments to either sex. Mind, on occasions such as this, vindicates its own dignity against the paltry prejudices of

men, and falsifies the common estimate of male and female courage. Delicate women there rose up in heroism, to meet the fate before which stalwart soldiers quailed. The paleness of desperation, the nervous flush, the sternly-fixed eye, the clenched hand, the grasped weapon—every variety of resolute intention was to be seen, mixed with those evidences of human feebleness, inseparable from, and almost excusable in, such a scene.

When Truchses ceased speaking, he folded his arms across his breast, and looked up towards heaven, as if his thoughts were entirely concentrated there.

And then, amidst the din of words and wailings, of oaths and shrieks, from the assembled household, while every variety of hostile sound, from the roar of cannon and the rattle of musquetry to the shouts of command and the yells of fury, arose from without. Von Heyen, on whose decision the fate of all seemed now to depend, cast one look on Agnes, as if it was from her, and her alone, that he sought his inspiration in this fearful crisis. She stood, looking around her with ardent gaze, as if she sought to read the varying countenances and separate characters of all present. Her right hand was placed on her heart; her left was closed nervously; her arm extended; her whole look a compound of courage and command.

“Madam,” said Von Heyen, “what are your highness’s orders?”

“That all resist to the last moment, and the last man! That no means of defence be left untried, that every nerve be strained to the utmost! Let every one able to wield a sword or fire an arquebuss turn instantly out into the courts. Let the women mount the parapets and towers and hurl down missiles on the foe! Let the war cry be——”

“Agnes! Agnes and victory! Long live the electress, our glorious sovereign! Agnes, Agnes for ever!” loud shouted Von Heyen, and the enthusiast cry was echoed from almost every throat of those present. The most timid were roused to action; the brave inflamed to fury. Swords were brandished, hands thrown aloft; while loudly redoubled stamping on the floor spoke the energy that animated both body and mind of the excited throng. Truchses, roused from his abstraction and imperfectly catching the meaning of the rapid

scene, started from his seat at the first burst of voices, and recovering instantly his usual lofty tone and attitude, he asked,

"Am I then obeyed? Is the enemy come?"

"Disobeyed, gloriously disobeyed," exclaimed Von Heyen, throwing himself on one knee before his master; "and by me, my sovereign; me, your most faithful, your most devoted creature. You shall, in your own despite, be saved—if my sacrifice can save you." The intrepid soldier then arose, and turning round, he cried, "Out, out to the gates, my friends! Up, women, all, to the turret towers; hurl down the piled-up stones in showers of ruin! Let torrents of boiling liquid rain on the enemy's heads! Forward, forward!"

He rushed from the chamber; and the vaulted corridors and halls resounded with the war-cry of himself and his bold followers, as they hurried to the scene of action; while from the lofty towers the shrill voices of the women soon sent down invective and defiance along with the galling and murderous combination detailed by Von Heyen for the enemy's annoyance.

The feelings of our heroine—is she not such at length, and beyond all cavil?—were not hurried away, like those of vulgar or undisciplined minds, in moments of excitement. Her thoughts seemed in all places at once—her affections in but one. Having effected her first object, the counteraction of the almost fatal effect of her husband's despair, she now was resolved that he should profit by the advantage she had gained—for him and over him!"

"My husband!" exclaimed she, in tones of most affectionate entreaty; but her voice as she proceeded swelled into the loftier melody of command, "my best beloved, what change has passed across thy mind to unman thee thus, in the hour that thy undaunted spirit needs even more than its wonted strength? Where has thy courage fled to? Is this indeed the man who has filled all Europe with the fame of his daring deeds? The proud defier of pope and emperor—the mark against which fate threw its shafts in vain? What! subdued at last by the shadow of a superstition? Oh, my own husband, turn back into yourself—rouse up, nor be outdone in gallant bearing by even the women of my household. Listen to those inspiring shouts, they are raised for thee. Look out on the bold actions of thy heroic followers—art thou alone

to turn craven at such a time ! Thou speakest not, thy look is fixed on me. Oh, let it turn aside—let its wonted tenderness be quenched in the fiery glance of war. Take thy sword from its scabbard, Truchses, let it flash dread in thy enemies' face, and encouragement and valour to thy friends, so may terms even now be made for the safety of all. Thou wilt not ? I cannot move thee to this last and greatest duty ? Then come, come without pause, and follow me. Since this cloud envelops thee too closely to be shaken off, thou must walk in its shadow ! Come, there is now no time to lose."

"Where wouldst thou lead me, my Agnes ? I dare not fly in heaven's face, or fight against its manifest decree."

"There is but one course left for us now—escape. Hesitate not, or we are lost indeed. The subterranean way is clear. Come, my own husband—thou wouldst not let me seek its perils alone ? Thou wouldst not sure abandon me ?"

"Abandon thee !" exclaimed Ghebhard, springing forward and seizing her proffered hand—and then, after a moment's pause—"On, on, my Agnes, when and where thou wilt. Heaven speaks in thy voice and shines in thy beaming looks—on, on, I am in all ways thine !"

Agnes took her husband's arm, and she hurried him from the chamber out into the corridor, and she stopped at the apartment occupied by the baroness Von Kriechlingen, with the intention of seeking means for enabling her and Emma to accompany their flight. Here a painful scene met her view. Emma, with dishevelled locks and disordered dress, knelt by her mother's couch—alone and unassisted in her efforts to support and revive the exhausted sufferer, struck suddenly with paralysis by the violent shock produced by the passing events. Agnes, forgetting in the impulse of generous sympathy, everything but the sad spectacle before her, shook off her husband's hold, and gave her whole aid to the feeble efforts of her friend. The wretched patient wore the aspect of death, but her pulse still seemed to throb, and a faint breathing belied the evidence of her livid and distorted looks. The almost distracted daughter, turned for awhile from the grief caused by the news of her lover's captivity, seemed wholly absorbed by this fresh calamity ; and the most wild and heart-rending lamentations burst from her.

In the meantime the increasing noises from without, the

frantic shouts within the castle, the hurrying feet, and the clatter of warlike implements moved to and fro, told that the contest was carried on with a desperation which promised a speedy term.

"Fly, fly, your highness, or it is too late—the frail portals cannot long resist—our men are falling fast," cried an officer, who was sent by Von Heyen to seek the elector, and who found him in the calm attitude of attendance at the door of the apartment into which Agnes had entered. She heard the appalling summons for flight, and with brief and broken phrase she proposed to Emma to accompany her in her attempt at escape—scarcely, however, venturing to urge, or hoping for her compliance with, a proposal which must necessarily have left her expiring mother to the doubtful mercy of a furious enemy. Emma, in wild but firm language, refused to quit her sacred duty to her parent, and with frenzied gestures she almost forced Agnes from the chamber. Our heroine had but one great impulse of action left—her husband's safety. Had he even then showed anything beyond the most hopeless resignation to their threatened fate, or given the least symptom of recovered energy for his own relief, Agnes had assuredly not quitted her young kinswoman, her all but sister, and would have shared the perils of her pious task. But the paramount influence of conjugal love left her no choice, no struggle. She once more caught Ghebhard's arm, and hurried him along.

They had reached the top of the great staircase, which was obstructed by a retreating crowd of servants, flying they knew not where, and for the vague object of safety, with what chance they could not calculate. The elector and his wife, scarcely recognised by their own people, and but little attended to or thought of in the general scramble for escape, forced their way forward as best they might; and they had descended to one of the principal halls when they were met by Walram, trembling and ghastly-looking, but who from long habit could not avoid feeling a sort of protection in the mere presence of his master. He recovered apparently from his terror, and found breath and courage enough to exclaim, not quite coherently,

"Your highness has taken the wrong way—the enemy have forced the gates, and are fighting their way hither through the courtyard."

"Whither goest thou, Walram?" asked the elector.

"I know not, your highness—I was flying I know not where—but in faint hopes of finding you."

"Now then thou hast found me, man, stand by me—it is thy best chance."

"This way, this way down by the south cloisters!" cried Agnes, turning into a low passage; when, at the moment, a band of infuriate combatants rushed into the hall, the assailants far outnumbering the household defenders, who were driven back, cut down, and trampled on without mercy. One group instantly interposed between Agnes and Ghebbard and the passage into which Walram had already escaped. The way was completely barred, and two of the ruffian enemy attempted to seize on Agnes, with some insulting expressions which evidently told that they knew her, or unerringly guessed who she was. At this outrage Ghebbard resumed at once his natural character. He grasped a sword from the hand of a wounded man who tottered near him, and with a well-aimed blow struck one of the fellows to the floor. Then pressing on the other who retreated from before his path, he gained ground every moment, Agnes clinging to his side, but her courage and strength almost failing under the excitement of the shocking scene.

And now a fresh burst of fighting men who drove all before them formed a new and almost impassable obstacle, when Von Heyen, disputing inch by inch the ground of his retreat, came towards the still closely-engaged elector, and seeing the object for which he battled, the devoted soldier was too happy, even at the sacrifice of his life, to afford a chance of safety to the sovereign to whom he owed everything and the heroic woman whom he gloried in dying for. In a few minutes every living obstruction fell beneath, or fled from his powerful strokes; and he lifted Agnes over the dead and wounded bodies which thronged the floor. She entered the passage, uttering a scarcely-heard sentence of gratitude to her preserver, and Ghebbard as he sprang after her grasped Von Heyen's hand in his with a pressure that spoke volumes of thanks, and he uttered one short exhortation to follow them to the vaulted passage beyond the cellars.

"Now then, come on, cowards!" cried Von Heyen, standing firmly before the passage, with uplifted arm ready to receive the foes, who scarcely waited for his taunting challenge

before they rushed on him in a throng. He had already been more than once wounded, but the sight of his own blood inflamed his rage, in a ratio far more than proportioned to the effects of weakness produced by its loss; and for a short time he gained almost supernatural strength. But numbers pressed on him too fiercely for much longer resistance, and he only dreaded that he must fall ere time sufficient was given for the fugitives to reach the subterranean passage, into which he clearly felt he was not destined to follow them.

Just as his assailants had nearly borne him down, for he fought almost unaided against fearful odds, and as the shrieks from various parts of the castle told him the horrors that were going on above, a huge fellow forced his way through the enemy—alas, he too was of them! and loudly called out for the privilege of striking the death-blow to the gallant Von Heyen.

“You know me not, perhaps?” cried he with insulting accents, as the latter paused panting and gazing, while he leaned on his reeking weapon for a moment’s rest. “Look here, Von Heyen!” and as he spoke he took off his casque and showed a long broad scar which the fierce exercise of the day made deeply crimson, although it was full five years cicatrised. “Look here at your own work, the price of your promotion—your first step to military honours; when you struck that fell stroke on an unarmed man I was an ignorant artisan. Now I am a tried soldier like yourself. I am able to cope with you and to avenge the dastard blow. I have worked hard to learn the rapier’s use, and long waited for the hour when I might measure swords with you. Are you ready?”

“I remember thee, rascal,” said Von Heyen, contemptuously. “Thou art of old too great a talker ever to make a good fighter. I have made my mark already on one side of thy ugly face; now I warn thee, take care of the other!”

And scarcely had he uttered the threat when a prompt stroke from his practised arm broke down the fellow’s guard, and cut his head nearly through and through. He fell in the death agony at his too-powerful antagonist’s feet; and the latter did not himself survive many minutes after this his last exploit. A score of weapons made his body their sheath; and his gallant spirit required the outlet of as many wounds to escape by.

As Ghebhard and Agnes hurried on through the cloisters, they faintly saw a man flying before them as rapidly as the imperfect light allowed. As he approached the extremity, beyond which he saw no means of egress but one turning which would have led him back towards the throng of the fight, as the clang of martial weapons too plainly told him, for he forgot in his fright another passage, half closed up and rarely used, he stopped for a moment, and then, with the surpassing agility of terror, he scrambled up the rugged wall, and strove to force himself through one of the narrow casemates, which admitted a gleam of light, but was not meant for the outgoing of any living thing.

"Why, Walram, Walram!" cried Ghebhard, "it is I. By Heaven, the man's fears have turned his brain! He is forcing himself out upon the dry fosse—a fearful fall! Walram, I say!"

But his voice, if heard, was only a fresh cause of terror to the frightened valet, who with almost incredible efforts had squeezed himself through the aperture. He seemed at length to shoot forth with nervous force, and disappeared. Truchses stopped one moment to listen, but the hellish din within the castle stifled the death-shriek which burst from the poor victim as he fell down into the fosse. He was not alone in the manner of his destruction. Several men, and women too, threw themselves headlong from the turret towers that morning [rather than risk the treatment to be looked for from the savage victors.

In a few minutes more Ghebhard and Agnes had turned through a secret door leading to the vaulted cellars, and thence safely gained the subterranean way known but to a few of the old domestics of the household, but never thought of as a refuge by any of them, from the dread belief of its being the chosen repair of ghosts and demons, and nothing else but an entrance into cavern depths of terrible destruction.

In this well-assured sanctuary the fugitives remained for several lingering hours; and at length forcing their way through its abounding obstructions, they reached the cavity of whose existence they were both well informed, and through it they entered into a low tangled mass of brushwood which skirted the river. In the close neighbourhood they found, by a happy chance, a loose-formed raft with its paddle, abandoned

most likely by its owner when he fled in alarm at the tumult; and to its fragile means of traversing the Rhine they owed their escape to the foot of the Drachenfels, and thence into the heart of the seven mountains, their crags and forests, and desolate dells, fit shelter for the outcasts and exiles of the peopled world.

To this day the tradition holds that Ghebbard Truchses and Agnes escaped from Godesberg to the opposite side of the Rhine by a subaqueous passage. But science in their time had not found power to execute, though enterprise might have imagined, the giant project of such a tunnel, the success of which is even now an unsolved problem.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THUS was Ghebbard Truchses, the once powerful prince, the ambitious prelate, the spoiled child of fortune, reduced by this last stroke of fate to complete destitution, with her for whose sake alone he was now susceptible of any of those crushing feelings which such a situation might engender. The thought that he had reduced her to this state, that he might by timely concession have compromised for her safety and support, the self-reproach of having under any possible contingency caused her the risk of such a lot, absorbed his mind. Everything—every person was now forgotten in the overwhelming sentiment of her misery. She on her part endured a combination of sufferings more poignant perhaps, but not so oppressive, as his. The doubtful fate of her brother, her friends, the faithful followers sacrificed for her and her husband's safety, all arose on her mind, together with the frightful chances of danger and death which now opened upon her view—not for herself, she would not have heeded the *certainly* even in her own case—but for him in whose safety her existence seemed to be involved; and with all this there was conjoined one other feeling terrible under the circumstances, yet carrying with it a wondrous and redeeming consolation to a woman's mind.

Every way unprepared for the night air, loosely clad, with-

out any means of sustenance for many hours, without any hope of shelter, they heard the chimes from the clock of their own sacked and desolate castle, and from two or three villages on either side the river, strike ten ; when finding it useless to proceed farther they stopped, and lay down side by side, on the moss-covered earth in the depth of a dark glen. And there they passed the night !

Description may pause at such a passage as this in the life and adventures of two such beings ; and imagination may exhaust itself in picturing what they said and thought, during the waking hours, and dreamt, in the brief snatches of sleep which exhausted nature saved from mental suffering.

And will it be thought extravagant to believe the possibility of even a situation so extreme holding the wild and wayward elements of compensation — almost enjoyment — to the high-wrought organisation of such minds as theirs ? The sober-going son of common-place, the minion of luxury, the vulgar voluptuary, may smile or sneer at the idea. But the romantic, the adventurous, and the daring, can comprehend, even though they might never have experienced, sensations that touch on, if they do not quite amount to, pleasure, in scenes of peril and privation even more trying than the one we describe. The charm of finding one's-self thrown, even by misfortune, from the beaten track of ordinary life, the new-found capability of endurance, the pride of suffering well, the charm of contrast, the awakened spirit of inquiry, all combine, to form a spring of energy and courage on which the elastic mind bounds into feelings it knew not of before.

It was a night of summer-warmth and summer-length. When the desolate pair lay down they could see nothing ; and no sounds were distinguishable in the distant gloom. How they sunk into sleep they knew not, for the mimic death gave no warning of its coming. They dropped suddenly and together into forgetfulness ; and the fantastic freaks played by their trance-struck minds had no connecting link to bind them to the past.

They awoke — and at once. A start, a broken exclamation — a wondering gaze, around and at each other, brought them to life and to perception again. “ He is safe ! ” “ She is safe ! ” was the first prompt utterance of reciprocal sensation. A renewed embrace — for they had slept fast locked in

each other's arms — came next. Then a gushing flood of tears from her, and a thousand kisses to dry them up from him ; and next, by mutual instinct, an instant posture of prayer and a murmured burst of thanksgiving—such was the opening scene of this new epoch in their eventful course.

It was more than dawn, for the sun darted his golden glances through the forest-depths, and the stems of the trees—the branches, and the leaf-covered ground, were here and there streaked with yellow gleams. Innumerable birds were chirping and singing above. But the only earth-born sound was the voice of a small rivulet, so deadened in the overhanging weeds that its murmurings were carried outwards by the faint breeze, more like fitful echoings than a constant and original sound ; while the breeze itself was only to be discovered by the wild flowers' scent that at times swept upwards in a fragrant swell. Ghebhard prayed fervently and aloud, as though duty and habit both were joined with the impulse of the moment. The pure thoughts of Agnes rose silently and spontaneously to heaven, less as it might seem by an effort of her will than by the sympathy of attraction, like the dew-drops around her sucked up invisibly by the sun.

They arose, and Truchses first broke the holy silence in which both had stood for awhile.

"Oh, Agnes, oh, my beloved!" said he, "can all this indeed be real? Have we lived through the horrid scene of yesterday, and slept through a whole long night unconscious and unharmed? And is the wide world as nought to us? Have we no shelter for our heads — no friends — no sanctuary? Are we driven out on earth alone, to be hunted like noxious beasts, or shunned like tainted lepers? Is this a fate for thee? Hast thou deserved this! And I — should I have brought this on thee? Oh, I could lie down again and die in my shame!"

"My own husband," replied Agnes, tenderly embracing him, "these words are my reproach, not thine. For is it not for my sake that thou hast earned all thy hard fortune? Was not I the fatal cause of all thy ills, the pretext for thy persecution? But I have no remorse. I make no wail for the past. We have acted for love's sake — we have done no ill. Heaven has visited us heavily, but are not our consciences unscathed?"

"Before high heaven, here in God's natural temple, I swear that I am conscious of no crime so heavy as to have brought thee to this cruel pass, my Agnes!"

"It is as nought to me, for my own sake — and could I but see ruin sit lightly on thee, Ghebbard, I would smile at and defy it."

"Oh, how bewitching are thy least words, how magical thy looks! How well thy beauty suits with this scene — thou seemest a part and parcel of its holiness. How beautiful is nature, Agnes, and how bountiful is Providence! Is not all earth a paradise till man defaces and pollutes it! Oh, how delighted I could live with thee for ever in this sylvan solitude, how thoroughly forget the world, all that I have lost and suffered; and let my rest of being glide away far in these forest depths! But that, alas! is a vain thought. The hideous world's before us! reft of all charin, all chance, all hope of good."

"Not so — not so, my husband. Providence is just as well as bountiful, and will not forsake us. I feel as though we were both new born, or like the first created pair, thrown into life full formed, with knowledge of the past, equivalent to God's spoken counsel, and faith in his power, as strong as though he walked in visible majesty by our side. We shall find a paradise yet in this broad world; some nook where persecution may not follow us, where sin may not enter, and from which no angry angel shall expel us. Cheer up, lord and life of my being — let a new era break upon thee — let sorrow for the friends we have lost be now the only bitter drop in the full chalice of enjoyment. Let us on then in our course, trusting in heaven's guidance, and seeing in nature's boundless beauties the fitness, the harmony, and the fulness of all things, those manifest miracles of creation which hold a pledge of safety and of happiness to man."

"Happiness, my Agnes? Ah, does not your enthusiastic virtue lead you now too far? Can there be happiness for the wholly destitute, who have once revelled in life's luxuries, who have had almost all greatness in their grasp, and who might fairly have aimed at *all*?"

"Alas, it is that false estimate of happiness, that makes so few people happy. We fancy it to consist in some great good, too distant to be reached — too large to be encircled in

our hold, while it is really formed of little things — flowers and gems that we spurn beneath our feet unnoticed, in that wild race after what is not it. Then let us, my husband, henceforth shun the spurious and collect the real, till from the thousand elements around us we form a bright and fragrant coronal that nothing may stain or wither.”

“Where seek, where find those elements, but in thy fancy, Agnes?”

“Oh, they are everywhere, each minute of life is full of them — they are the diamond sparks of thought, the odorous buds of feeling — *We* have a mine, a garden in our own hearts, and we must, we will gather the rich harvest yet! I promise thee this, my husband.”

“My Agnes, there is a spirit of prophecy in thy tone and looks, and inspired conviction, that make thee seem more than mortal! What is it, love, that in this desolate and dreary passage of life throws o’er thy beauty this superhuman glow, as though a shower of good had fallen on thee, instead of this cruel storm? Oh, tell me truly, and let me if possible catch a spark from the bright beam — for I feel deadly chill in spirit, and almost sinking to despair. Speak comfort, Agnes, if thou can’st; I am sore in need of it, for thy sake and my own.”

“I will, I will; and God grant that what I have to reveal may be to thee a living spring of joy, a covenant of comfort, as it is to me! Oh, my best love! is not Heaven good, to have reserved to this hour of trial the healing balm of our heart’s wounds? Does not thy ardent mind anticipate the tidings? Need I speak more? Have the deep yearnings of four years not led thee to an instinctive knowledge now? — Yes, yes, my husband, it is true! We do not now walk alone in life’s drear wilderness, with mere personal objects, and but selfish wants or wishes; but now, fulfilling the high destiny of our kind, we have a holier fellowship — we were *not* born for nought, but to live and perish.”

This *was* plain speaking to the ready and enraptured intellect of Truchses. He caught from the first phrase the tenor of his wife’s coming revelation; and the transport it created was unbounded. The great longing of his life had been — beyond ambition’s furthest stretch — for offspring, rather from an inborn sentiment than from any definable purport of de-

light. It was a want of his heart — a never-ceasing pulse of expectation ; and the as yet unfulfilled blessing had been the only drawback on his wedded happiness. Had it been from the mere pride of handing down his name, his honours, or his greatness, it would have been only in prosperity that he would have valued it. But the uncalculating delight with which he now hailed the announcement, in ruin and worldly wretchedness, proved that he was acted on but by that instinct of paternal love which nature has planted in man's heart. And those who contemplate the joy of Agnes, both for her own and her husband's sake, and all her exquisite imaginings of joy to come, will admit that woman has, in the mysterious plan of heaven, a glorious compensation for the great suffering and apparent injustice of her share in the world's design.

Ghebbard and Agnes left the scene of this hour of happiness, and sallied forth from the glen, with a bounding confidence that made them wholly fearless of discovery. But they met no one — nor friend nor foe. The romantic woods through which they wended their way were as uninhabited and unexplored as some primitive forest of the new world. In a period of time, even apparently shorter than it really was, they reached the term of their present pilgrimage. Truchses knew enough of the general topography of the wild district of the seven mountains to find his way, with little deviation, to Nuenar's castle, deep buried among the mountains, but standing on an eminence in the forest, in the direction of Lowenburg.

It was broad day when they arrived at the once cheerful residence, where Nuenar was happy and honoured in giving a nobly hospitable welcome to his bosom friend, the Elector of Cologne. The contrast was now hideous. A mass of ruins met Ghebbard's view, without any symptoms of a living thing save the birds which roosted fearlessly within the walls, or the hares and rabbits which sported in the brushwood that filled the courts. He knew that this favourite retreat of his chief captain had been sacked and partly burned by the enemy a year before. But his imagination had not dwelt on the details of destruction ; and a thrill of remorse now assailed him when he pictured this stanch ally ruined and a prisoner for his cause alone ; some analogous feeling passed through Agnes's mind at the same moment. But it passed quickly from one as

from the other. They were losing rapidly their sympathy with former feelings. An inborn presentiment seemed to tell them the frail tenure which they held on others' sympathy.

The high excitement of the morning was subsiding, and the weaknesses of nature became paramount over the ecstasies of mind. Food was now the immediate want, and to procure it seemed at first sight impossible. Urged by this powerful impulse, Truchses made his way through the tangled obstacles which beset him and his almost fainting companion, into the very heart of the desolate building; and at length arrived at a remote and low outhouse at the foot of what he well remembered to have been called "The Skeleton Hunter's Tower," in allusion to some wild tradition of the place. In this unpromising locality he found all that he wanted now, and more than he dared to hope for, food and shelter, and a friend! An old woman, one of the oldest followers of the family of Nuenar, born and bred in the place, beyond which she had no tie, nor interest, nor inducement for research, had clung tenaciously to the spot; and lived there since the castle was sacked and its inhabitants scattered on the world. Alone and almost forgotten, she occasionally went out into the distant villages, to raise contributions on the charitable, or to purchase some few necessities with the hoarded store of former savings. But no visitor ever approached her dwelling. Superstition was her guarantee against intrusion, and a sufficient counterpoise to any friendly feeling that might have prompted a humane peasant to lighten, by a friendly call, her desolate seclusion. It was believed that magic alone had preserved from the fire (which almost entirely consumed the castle) this lonely tower, long believed to have been haunted; and the perseverance with which the old woman identified herself with the unholy place, brought her a share of the general suspicion and dread attached to it.

She well remembered the once mighty Elector of Cologne, his visits to the castle, his magnificent hunting parties in the forest, and his princely generosity to herself and the other household retainers. There was a spring of gratitude and goodness in her old heart, and she at once received Truchses and Agnes under her protection, and promised and preserved inviolable secrecy, and proved unshaken in her fidelity to their fortunes.

There was happily nothing repulsive in the looks, the man-

ners, or the habits of this old creature. She had been handsome in her youth, and was healthy in her old age ; a natural good taste made her attentive to cleanliness in person and to neatness and regularity in her solitary home. She had saved from the wreck a superabundance of materials for household wants ; and a couple of chambers in the haunted towers were ready filled, with even more than the conveniences of lodging. After the peremptory appeals of hunger were answered, by a homely meal quickly prepared, and eaten with a gusto that the overburdened feasts of the electoral palaces had never excited, Agnes and her husband proceeded to inspect the lonely building which they at once decided on making their sanctuary. Fatigued, not more by bodily exertion than mental excitement, Agnes, after some preliminary arrangements, sunk into repose, on a bed of down little to be looked for ; while her chamber was furnished with an incongruous collection of articles, some of them as costly as those to which she had been all her life accustomed. The whole situation of the place seemed a mockery on greatness, and the lesson was not lost on its forced occupants.

No sooner did Ghebbard see that Agnes slept soundly than he felt impressed with a restless wish to explore minutely the ruins of the castle, and also to extend his wanderings out into the forest precincts, in hopes of calming down into some form of regular thought the turbulent flood of his sensations. It was sunset before he returned from a solitary ramble, in which his reveries came nearer to the tone of true philosophy than had been reached by the most acute and loftiest cogitations of his previous life.

Agnes awoke from her slumber, refreshed and revived in a manner before unknown to her. She had often slept the sleep of weariness, but never of downright fatigue till then. Her frame seemed to have acquired a new spring. She arose, and, seeing the volume of golden light poured into her chamber, she concluded that the sun was sinking beyond the Rhine, that long-loved territory with which so many chequered feelings were connected, where her best affections were born, her highest aspirations reached, and where so many heavy strokes were dealt to the worldly well-being of herself and those most dear to her. She was in a mood to see nature in one of its most affecting and instructive aspects, when the rich flood of depart-

ing light pours melancholy and consolation at once upon the mind, and fits it for all that is elevating and soothing in reflection. Agnes softly quitted the chamber, lest her watchful hostess might officiously interrupt, in the view of assisting her. She ascended the stone stairs of the tower, to the story over that occupied by her apartment, and from the windows of the vacant room above she gazed on the glorious spectacle of sunset, in a wide range of forest and hill scenery, and she lingered long, marking the gathering shades that shut the pageant out.

Anxious, at length, to seek her husband, she turned away, and observing a small and half-closed door that opened in the direction opposite to her descent, she pushed it aside, and stepped into a long and narrow corridor, that had evidently communicated with the main body of the building; curiosity led her on, and at every step she marked the ravages of the fire on the walls and floor, which were partly consumed and blackened. Several remnants of furniture, and pictures fallen down half burnt and broken, were the only objects to be observed, till at the farthest end she saw one large framework unharmed against the wall, a mouldy and moth-eaten cloth curtain concealing from view the picture she supposed it to contain. The fire seemed to have suddenly stopped on reaching this mysterious object; and Agnes felt impelled by its singularity to raise the curtain and examine its contents.

Her eye first caught the figure of a man in an ancient and grotesque hunting suit, painted with the rigidity of the earliest successors of Van Eyk, and a pair of hands of the same primitive school, coloured to the life, but setting grace and anatomy at defiance. Agnes threw a glance upwards to mark the countenance of this unattractive form, and was quite prepared to see some harsh and repulsive daub. But when she brought her looks to a level with the head, and fixed them on it, an involuntary scream of horror burst from her—she clasped her hands forcibly across her eyes, and turned from the hideous object.

It was a loathsome likeness of a half-unfleshed skull that stood out, as it were, from the canvas, rising on a bare neck from the cramped and distorted body, and surmounted by a bonnet and plume of black feathers. Nothing could exceed the frightful accuracy of this object in form and colour. It showed the hideous expression of grinning ugliness, the hollow

depths of eye-sockets, and the carious tints of decay, with a revolting truth that spoke it to have been painted from a charnel-house model. The semi-human contrast between life and death was monstrous. It was overpowering to Agnes. She retreated in ineffable disgust. But she had not gone half-way back through the corridor when she plainly heard pursuing steps, sounding, she thought, as a forest-hunter's foot might sound. She thrilled with a nameness terror; but she could not turn her head, though she felt that the steps were gaining on her—and, in the sudden confusion of the senses, she thought her own name was sounded hollowly in her ears. Every moment seemed to bring closer to her the embodied reality of the shocking object she fled from; and she anticipated from instant to instant that which would see her clasped by the loathsome prototype of the skeleton-hunter's portrait. Panting, throbbing, and almost wild with fright, Agnes at length felt her pursuer's breath close on her neck, and in a moment more a deadly grasp seemed encircling her. In that involuntary impulse which makes us court the most horrid certainty in preference to suspense, she cast her staring and gazed looks behind, and she saw the anxious countenance of Ghebbard close to hers, whilst his arms supported her almost fainting body. She could scarcely believe that she only recovered from an imagined peril. She felt that she, too, possessed those susceptibilities of superstition common to the age she lived in; and, for many minutes after she had reached her apartment, the personified terrors of the painted phantom seemed still pursuing and still ready to grasp her.

The old woman was busily employed in the arrangements of the chamber when Agnes and Ghebbard returned. Our heroine, ashamed of her weakness, yet filled with a morbid impatience to dwell on the subject, insisted on the old woman's relating the story which was connected with the picture, and which gave its name to the tower. The crone was ready and willing; for the supernatural legends of the place were to her as the air she breathed, and she, without hesitation, commenced telling, as follows:—

THE STORY OF THE SKELETON HUNTER.

“It was some centuries ago, ere the art of printing was known, and when even that of writing was confined to pious

monks and a few learned clerks, that one of the ancestors of this noble house of Nuenar, but whose name has not been preserved by the family genealogists, a knight of much renown in war, and a deep drinker and hard hunter in peace, happened to follow the chase in the neighbouring forest, which in those days spread close to the very banks of the Rhine, and sent up its mists even upon the walls of the rude Donjon tower, which then occupied the site of the present castle and the spacious courts and open grounds.

"The good knight found out at sunset that he was quite alone and had lost his way. It seemed strange to him that his followers should have suddenly disappeared; and stranger still that he should be at any loss to recognise the surrounding scene, as he thought himself acquainted with the most intricate parts of the forest. He vainly sought to extricate himself. The gloom grew thicker, the trees seemed to increase in height, and the brambles and underbushes to spring up in every direction in spontaneous confusion. Exhausted by his efforts to force a passage, the knight at last threw himself on the ground, his two faithful stag-hounds by his side; and there he lay till he heard the chimes of a distant clock mournfully sounding the hour of midnight. While the last tone still vibrated in the air, a confused rustling sound broke on the ears of the knight; and a glimmering lustre, neither like moonlight nor dawn, was visible far away. He started on his feet, and seized his javelin in his hand. The dogs also sprang up, but instantly ran crouching between their master's legs, and howled piteously. The noise and the light increased every instant. The tramping of many hoofs was mixed with discordant tones of hunting horns, and the whoops and halloos of the chase. A vast illumination of sulphureous gleams spread wide across the forest; and, to the knight's astonishment, the trees and bushes retreated back and away, leaving an immense space quite clear from wood, and covered with rugged stones.

"The knight, with all his bravery, felt himself to shake with fear; and his hair stood right on end, when he saw approaching him at full speed the figure of a hunter, on foot, his bow in his hand, his bugle at his belt, and followed closely by a troop of skeletons, mounted on stags of enormous size. The hunter sought to escape by every possible means. He twisted and turned in every direction, but in vain. The

skeletons flung javelins or shot arrows at him, accompanied with infernal yells ; and as the weapons pierced him through and through, he uttered the most heart-rending screams, but still kept on his legs, and ran as though he were unhurt. A full hour passed on in this way, when the knight, who had during that stood transfixed with horror, recovered his presence of mind, threw himself on his knees, and loudly invoked the name of his own particular saint.

“ In an instant, the whole troop of phantom skeletons and their stags disappeared. The hunter whom they had been so long pursuing approached the knight, and said to him, ‘ Thanks and gratitude, my deliverer ! That invocation of yours has ended my torments and opened for me the path of paradise. I am your far-back ancestor, Rudolf the hunter. Like you, I loved the chase, but alas ! I had no better pursuit than that, and I followed it in cruelty and crime. I ruined my poor serfs with taxation and extortion ; and whenever a wretch, desperate with hunger, was found poaching after my game, I used to have him seized and tied on the largest stag, and sent out into the forest, pursued by my fiercest dogs, to perish in untold agonies. You saw just now a repetition of my nightly punishment for centuries back ; and it had been eternal, had not your presence and your prayer broke the charm, and dispersed for ever those ghosts of the sufferers who died by my tyranny. To-night my purgation ends ; and to celebrate my fate I command you to build a chapel for the repose of my soul, and to have my portrait painted as I now am, and placed in the gallery, to hand down my likeness to our posterity, as a warning against my crimes and a token of my penance. But woe to the curious intruder, not of our own blood, who dares to look on it ! ’ With these words he threw aside the hunting bonnet and the plumes which had hitherto concealed his face, and displayed a death’s head of a most hideous character. The knight swooned with horror ; and when he awoke he found himself surrounded by some of his people, who had after many hours’ search discovered him in the thickest part of the forest, senseless on the earth, his javelin in one hand, and his large cordial flagon held (empty) in the other. He returned to his castle, built the chapel, the ruins of which formed the foundation of this tower, and in three days (but by whose assistance never was known) the horrid portrait of Rudolf the skeleton-

hunter was finished from the good knight's accurate memory, and took its place among the others of his race, and has been from time immemorial covered with a curtain which was strictly forbade being raised. And it is said that the skeleton knight has often appeared since then, to arrest the curiosity that would pry into the monument of his guilt, and it is believed that three rash persons who have, notwithstanding, raised the dark veil, have been instantly pursued by the portrait, and punished in a manner too frightful to record."

* * * * *

Many a time for successive months did Agnes shudder at the recollection of this story, and at the thought of her near neighbourhood to the picture; but as often did she deeply blush, from a sense of the weakness which she had power sufficient to despise, but not to overcome.

CHAPTER XXIX.

UPWARDS of half a year passed over the heads of Ghebhard and Agnes in their obscure and unobstructed retreat. Of actual necessities they had no want, and experience taught them how limited are the exigencies of individual support, for those who can adapt themselves with good sense and good temper to unavoidable privations. They had each carried away some pieces of gold on the day of their escape from Godesberg—much more than was wanting for the expenditure of four times the term of their stay in the seven mountains—as well as some rings and other jewelled ornaments, which, converted into money, would form a fund for future occasions. The fidelity and caution of their old hostess, so to call her, was their chief security and never-failing comfort. She procured for them in the distant villages many little luxuries, or what in present circumstances they chose to consider as such, and she also picked up snatches of news, imperfect and contradictory at times, but in the main correct, which greatly relieved their anxiety as to the fate of others.

By this means they learned the fact as creditable to human

nature as it was consoling to themselves, that the furious assailants of the electoral castle had paid a tribute to filial tenderness and female virtue by sparing Emma and her dying mother, and conveying both in safety to Bonn, where they were placed under the natural protection of the imprisoned Baron Kriechlingen, who, together with Christopher de Mansfelt, and Charles Truchses, were soon after restored to freedom. The great mark of hostility, in fact, was Ghebhard himself; and he having made his escape, his enemies felt little disposed to persecute his kindred or few adherents, who in the present prospect of affairs were utterly incapable of mischief to the newly-established order of things. Ernest of Bavaria was now the unopposed possessor of the dignities and the power of the electorate; and of all those who had mixed in the long and arduous struggle there was scarcely one who had not, in a few weeks after its termination, made terms of peace and security for themselves, with the exception of Count Nuenar, who, for some irreverent obstinacy, even after his last defeat, was still held in captivity by orders of the offended emperor. The fate of Truchses and his wife excited many speculations, and sundry marvellous reports concerning them were rife throughout Europe; but no living being, with the exception of their old protectress, imagined them to be still almost within sight of the central seat of their former greatness.

And few could have believed, even if they had been assured of the profound and philosophic calm which had succeeded to the long indulged impetuosity, the untamed ardour of temperament, which had distinguished Ghebhard Truchses up to the epoch of his marriage, and the strong current of which had borne him on for subsequent years, even after the tide of his ambitious energy was on the ebb. Living now in and for themselves alone, and upheld by the exquisite feeling of parental hope, he and his admirable wife formed an instructive evidence of the blessed remedy which true love carries with it for all worldly ills. Enough has been recorded of their mutual train of thought; and the reader whom we would deeply interest in their fate must not be palled by multiplied details of their monotonous delights. Rather let them and their daily pursuits be left to the imagination of some, and the picture of their resignation and their content to others' wonderment. Many there are, we have no doubt, who can

believe in the truth of and sympathise with the actors in, such an episode of human feeling. Some there exist, we know, who are susceptible of sensations, and have experienced scenes almost analogous.

How many a day was passed by the lone pair in quiet wanderings through the forest-paths, reading deep lessons of philosophy in the memory of the past, and finding rich elements of actual enjoyment in the wide book of nature lying unclasped before them ! It is almost inconceivable how soon and how completely a finely-organised mind adapts itself to inevitable circumstances of reverse, which would bring a blunted intellect to despair. The sense of enjoyment is proportioned to the vivacity of the mind, and the thousand fresh-springing sources of pleasure open to the more susceptible among human beings, far outbalance the power of that morbid tone of suffering which weighs down the dull. There is, besides, an inestimable gratification in the feeling of having profited by the world's rude lessons, in being convinced that you know mankind from experience, not theory. Nothing makes men more independent in mind than the circumstance of being ruined in fortune. They then know the feeble hold which mere sympathies of feeling or opinion give them on their kind. They discover how much of what seemed to spring from those causes was really owing to the strong tie of mutual interests. And as that is severed, and each individual is, as it were alone, we see the selfish neglecting and striving to despise his ruined friend ; the high-minded becoming indifferent to and viewing with pity his worthless associate.

These and many other as useful lessons were self-learned by Ghebhard Truchses in his half-year's solitude. He grew thoroughly indifferent to many beings who had deceived and abandoned him, and to wrench himself from whom he once thought would have been excruciating torture. A conviction of the baseness of those one loved and confided in, is the true means of protection against the lighter assaults of ill fate. The ordeal of betrayed confidence is a cruel one for a sensitive mind. But if it be the only real means of coming to a wholesome estimate of human nature, happy are they who pass through it early, ere the heart is deadened by age to the abounding compensations of life, and while the truth it teaches can be turned to the advantage of those who in a new gene-

ration may reap the benefit of what has been learned by the last. Ghebbard Truchses required the rough blasts of suffering to clear away the romantic haze through which he had looked on the world. Good sense was at the bottom of his character ; but strong feelings and active spirits had long retarded its development in the practical affairs of life, and he had been repeatedly a dupe to those who in comparison with him were shallow, ignorant, and untalented. It is a mistake to believe that wisdom is acquired by experience. Want of sense admits of no amelioration, though good sense may be improved. Knowledge of life may teach cunning, but wisdom is a gift of nature. A man may be eminently wise without knowing that he is so. When Solomon prayed to Heaven for wisdom, it was a proof that he possessed it already.

Our hero and heroine had now to endure another and a more cruel stroke of fate than any they had yet suffered from. All the hopes of their adversity—which repaid them a thousand-fold for the losses of their greatness, were doomed to be crushed for ever. The heart really sickens when it contemplates the mutual agony of this hapless couple bereft of the pledge of their recovered serenity, the promise of joy to come. Attended alone by the old woman of the tower, who had been herself the parent of many children, Agnes had in due time become a mother. What a moment of enchantment for her, thus repaid for all suffering—for him, transport beyond all imaginable bounds of delight. They lost their child—but to other pens must be left the task of dwelling on such a calamity, which they who can calmly describe have assuredly never keenly felt. They had now nothing to contemplate but flight from the scene of this suffering. As soon as Agnes was sufficiently recovered to encounter the fatigues, the risks, and the anxieties of a journey, they prepared to remove. But whither go? How travel? They left the decision of those questions to chance ; and they were so decided.

It was now February. The snow still lay thick on the ground, the wind blew roughly, the forest view around was bleak and desolate. The red sun lit up at times the naked trees, as if in mockery of their deformity ; at others a thick fog covered them, as though winter was ashamed of, and strove to hide the disgrace it had inflicted upon nature. But cold and

dreary as was the world without, the heart-faintness of affliction within was less endurable. To remain in this place was impossible — any other was better — and consequences, be they what they might, had now no terrors.

Agnes, supported by her husband — we speak of bodily support — for neither could now even assume, much less exert, an effort for the other's consolation — leaning on Ghebhard's arm, essayed an occasional walk, out in the open air, on a path which he had cleared in the snow-covered court of the castle. Truchses had procured, soon after their arrival, and through the management of the benevolent old woman, clothes for himself, of mean materials, fitting at random, and so uncouth in pattern and fashion that, coupled with his now untrimmed beard and woe-changed looks, they formed so thorough a disguise, that he could have run little risk of discovery had he walked in open day through the capital of his lost electorate. Agnes had also been provided, through the same source, with a couple of homely suits, such as befitted the female serfs of the district; and to accustom themselves to those dresses they wore them from time to time, having completely discarded the costly ones in which they escaped, and which seemed to form the last link in the chain of their former associations. It was on one of those bleak, bright mornings, ere spring can venture on its annual struggle with the frozen year, while the wintry sun shines without warming, like an old man's love, that Agnes and Ghebhard, so disguised, snatched an hour for their mid-day promenade. They had taken a few slow and melancholy turns on their restricted path, when they both started in a tumult of long-forgotten sensations on seeing Count Nuenar enter the desolate courtyard.

He had stopped, and was looking with a cold inquiry on the unexpected occupants of his ruined castle, but without recognising them. When they first observed him, Ghebhard, in such sudden burst of feeling as nature may be fancied to experience when a northern winter all at once dissolves and disappears, sprang forward with open arms, and uttered in delighted accents the name of his long-loved and long-lost friend. Nuenar started in his turn, — but his movement was not a forward one. He no longer doubted Ghebhard's identity. He was too painfully sure of it. But this living appeal to all

the generous sympathies of the heart, even Agnes's pale beauty, and the whole history of their sufferings revealed at a moment's recollection, failed to produce the least evidence of a correspondent pleasure at the meeting.

"Why, Adolphus," exclaimed the not yet enough experienced Truchses, "dost thou not know me! am I indeed so changed?"

"Yes, yes, I know you; and these blackened walls methinks are sharp whetters to my memory," said Nuenar, taking, but after a faint pressure relinquishing again, the outstretched hand of his former friend.

Truchses' very heart seemed to collapse within him. He drew back; a flush passed across his cheeks.

"The allusion is an apt, though scarcely a generous one, Count Nuenar," replied he—"but your reproach may pass without retort, if it was only for its being so ill-timed."

With these words Truchses turned aside, and rejoined Agnes, while Nuenar folded his arms and for a moment half-buried his face in his furred cloak, as Truchses supposed from shame, but it was really from thoughtfulness. He did not long ponder for a rejoinder to Ghebhard's reply; but, while the latter strove to repress his rising resentment, and Agnes gazed to read his feelings in his looks, the count advanced a few steps, and resumed,

"Ghebhard, these are no times for ceremony or false delicacy——"

"Nor for civility or true delicacy, it would seem. This lady is my wife, Count Nuenar," said Truchses, in a stern yet broken voice.

"Tis needless to remind me of it; you know it is so. I am not now here to bandy compliments; but that lady's person is not one to be forgotten, let her play what part she may, in whatever masquerade."

"Play a part! a masquerade!" exclaimed Truchses.

"In one word,—and I now address myself to both, meaning no offence, but being earnest in thought, and perhaps somewhat peremptory in phrase,—I will not, cannot do more in a lost cause. Half-ruined in fortune, and but just released from a dungeon, you cannot expect that I will let myself be again dragged down"——

"By Heavens, Count Nuenar, I will not and cannot let

myself, already down as I am, be thus trampled on!" exclaimed Truchses, Agnes vainly endeavouring to restrain him; "and, in the bitterness of deceived opinion, I tell you that this is unworthy, unseemly, and unmanly."

"Ghebhard, I will have no war with you, not even of words. We have had enough, methinks, of quarrelling with others; and it is not for two houseless men to fling ill language at each other's heads."

"And is it meet, sir, that I, unsheltered and unguarded as I am, should be made the mark of open insult thus? Is it through *her*, too, that I am to be assailed? For shame, for shame, Nuenar. The cruel wrong recoils on thee: thou art for ever disgraced in doing this!"

"Ghebhard, I stand on my honour and my integrity. Your taunts break at my feet like angry waves against a rock. And if it be that I show my resolute resistance to your selfish designs—my scorn of the trick that would take me by surprise—in a tone unpalatable to you or your syren accomplice, why, 'tis my nature, and you must bear with it."

"Yes, yes! it is my time to speak; thou must not hinder me," exclaimed Agnes, advancing between the angry men, and repressing her husband's efforts to restrain her, for his outraged feelings could not endure her condescending to speak to Nuenar.

"I see there is some error in your mind, Count Nuenar; and great it must be to qualify to your conscience and your heart this scandalous outrage to a ruined and an innocent man. Your misplaced sarcasms against me pass, sharp but fleeting, like the breeze that colours while it chills my cheek. But this foul wrong against my husband must have a deeper source."

"I repeat, madam, with all due reverence for your sex and you, I will not wrangle here, nor be wrought to deeper ruin anywhere. If seven months' pampering in the palatinate have led but to this scene, the lost electorate of Cologne stands little chance of recovery."

"This coarse enigma must be solved, Count Nuenar," said Truchses again: "you may be under some delusion. Heaven grant you are so, for your own honour's sake! What mean you?"

"Will you then force me to explain how, why, and where-

fore I am prepared for this well-planned surprise? Must I needs prove to you that I know the scheme of your designing ally, John Cassimir, which, after half a year's concoction, you are now no doubt come—Heaven knows how!—from Heidelberg to bring to bear upon me! But, once more and for all, I promise you 'tis in vain; my peace with the emperor is made. I have done too much for you already; and these ruined walls, built up by my ancestors, defaced and shattered by my folly, might blush to see me again a dupe. Have I now said enough?"

"Enough, to convince me you have been indeed a dupe to some vile fable or false fancy;—too much, to make it possible to renew the bond of fellowship between us. Your dishonouring surmise, Nuenar, is unreal: our friendship is dissolved for ever."

"Well, be it so, if so it must be. It was a dear experiment—on my side, at least, and we reaped small good from it. But if indeed I am misinformed in the widely-believed report of your having harboured with the palatine while I lay in the stronghold of Nuremberg, or in my notion that your meeting me here now was by concocted plan, where, let me have you found shelter since the disastrous day of Godes-

"There!" said Truchses, pointing to the tower.

"There!" exclaimed Nuenar,—"nay, that would have been wretchedness indeed."

"It was comparative delight to what a palace home had been, with a crafty mind, or a hard heart. But I have now no hope of your comprehending either what we have enjoyed or what we suffered here. My uppermost feeling now is pain, to have owed you even the unmeant favour of a shed to cover and conceal us from the world."

"Hold, Ghebbard—give me breathing time! I am indeed now taken by surprise—and is this possible? can this shell of misery have cribbed in for months thy proud spirit, her unmatched beauty?—Say, madam, since he will not——"

"It did more, Count Nuenar—it fostered our mutual faith in each other, and helped the growth of our conviction that all other reliance is a broken reed," said Agnes, meeting his appeal more than half-way.

"As *I* am? Is it not so? your words imply as much."

"*Your* words have proved it, Count Nuenar!" resumed she.

"Yes," observed Truchses, "proved it too clearly and too cruelly. But I spare you all further discussion on a painful topic, Nuenar—and will soon remove all risk of future embarrassment."

"Ghebhard, let us be still friends. I admit my fault—I offer thee my hand, my heart, my purse——"

"No more, Nuenar, I reject them all. It is too late. The sneer which began this conference on your part has broken the charm for ever. Homeless, and all but penniless, I could not in the teeth of an unfair reproach accept thy money or retain possession even of thy ruined tower. Prithee, then, let not our conference be prolonged; and excuse my thus ending it."

With these words, Truchses led Agnes towards the narrow and broken stairs which led up to their habitation.

"Ghebhard, one word! we do not surely separate as enemies?"

Truchses turned round, paused a moment, and said calmly,

"As enemies? No, you have done too much in other days, you were lodged too strongly in my heart in better times, to let my feeling towards you turn to gall. If ever the wide chances of the world should bring us together again—but I devoutly pray that they may not!—I will meet you as coldly but more kindly than you met me erewhile. That is all I promise—more mayhap than you now care for, Nuenar. No, I can never hate you, but I never can forget this scene. The wrong of an enemy may be in time forgiven—the slight of a friend, never. Farewell."

A graceful but chilling salutation from Agnes confirmed her husband's fiat; and they then ascended to their pride-ennobled shed, in all the dignity of wounded virtue. And now one word of explanation for Count Nuenar, and through him perhaps of apology for human nature. His friendship for Ghebhard Truchses, if such it may be called, was a mere refraction of the broad and genial light which glowed in the latter's heart. He was less tinged than the general run of men in his romantic age, with the ardent colouring which gave to mere everyday sentiments the force of passions. Friendship was with him a convenience rather than a conviction. He entered into Truchses' views and helped on his purposes, as has been long since explained, mainly for the furtherance of his own. And

when Truchses was ruined, his attachment was, by the very nature of its inspiration, burned out. Having made his own submission to the imperial dictation, and seeing all chance of carrying his objects in the electorate of Cologne extinct, he was resolved to make the best he could of the future, and to forget as much as possible of the past. He had really heard and believed that Truchses and Agnes were concealed by the elector palatine ; and, seeing them suddenly on this morning of his return (alone and in no mood of elation to inspect his ruined castle), pranked out, as it appeared, in peasant's suits, for the purpose of waylaying and impressing him into some new and hopeless struggle, he held no terms either with a proper sense of decorum or just delicacy towards them.

So far, to account for Nuenar's conduct. And as to his state of feeling and manner of expression, few men who have passed through the ordeal of great worldly reverse will think them, even in these days of refinement, as out of the natural course of things. The whole misfortune or fault—it is not worth disputing about terms—was in such a mind as Truchses' being led to lavish its high and noble feelings on one altogether unable to comprehend them. Yet Nuenar was not quite so dead to sentiment as not to wish to repair, in as far as was now left him, his harsh behaviour, while at the same time he might take measures for ridding himself thoroughly of so great a possible encumbrance, as the support of Truchses and his wife, and the imminent danger of being again compromised in their fate. Therefore, in leaving the place of this wild meeting, having first learned from the old guardian of the ruins enough to rouse every latent spark of his humanity, he wrote a letter of reconciliation and advice, with a detailed plan for Ghebhard's conduct ; and assurance of assistance in all ways now possible. And this he despatched to the tower the next morning, from the neighbouring town, where he had left his attendants when he chose to pay his solitary visit to the desolated monument of ancestral power. His messenger, wholly ignorant of the name and quality of the person to whom he bore this peace-offering, approached the ruins, ascended the tower—and found it empty. Ghebhard and Agnes had hastened their intended departure in consequence of the scene of the preceding day. And as soon as the dawn struggled through the night mists sufficiently to enable

them to see the wood paths clearly, they had set out, after a cordial leave-taking, and giving an ample token of their gratitude to the faithful old woman : and a few minutes carried them for ever out of sight of the Skeleton Hunter's Tower. What Nuenar's reflections might have been, when assured of this sudden self-removal, we must not now stop to inquire, nor hereafter think it necessary to recur to.

CHAPTER XXX.

STILL feeble, yet braced by the accustomed exercise of the previous months, Agnes was well able to walk from the ruins to the nearest village, supported on her husband's arm ; the other carrying a slight change of indispensable apparel, for they decided on leaving to chance the choice of those necessary supplies, the nature of which must depend on circumstances, to provide which on any reasonable scale of cost their funds were amply sufficient.

The plan of their intended journey had been deliberately traced the preceding day, in accordance with the project of previous consultations. There were but two princes in Europe on whose protection Ghebhard could reckon with such certainty as might be drawn from their private characters and reliance on the sincerity of their political principles. Those were Henry IV. of France, and William of Nassau, surnamed the Taciturn, who was now at the very height of his fame and power, as the founder of Dutch freedom and the safeguard of the Protestant faith in the Netherlands. The first of those distinguished friends of the deposed elector was, however, still so harassed in the possession of his sovereignty, that it would have been ungenerous as well as hazardous to have imposed a fresh burden on him. Truchses therefore resolved on making his way if possible to Delft, the safe and quiet seat of the Prince of Orange's government, where he reigned over his created republic with all the influence of an absolute monarch, but with the firmness and moderation of a virtuous citizen. Of a welcome, Truchses had no doubt, for all he required was a present shelter, and

for the future a moderate subsistence as a minister of the reformed church. These were moderate expectations for fallen greatness, and assured boons at the hands from which alone Truchses would have condescended to demand them. It was, then, to the banks of the not far-off Rhine that the wanderers now bent their steps; and a common waggon, hired at the first hamlet, was the conveyance which brought our half-exhausted heroine to the river's edge.

Their intention was to take their passage in one of those trading barges which sailed down from Germany to Holland; and their main wish was to meet with such a conveyance soon, to obviate the chances of being recognised while in so close a neighbourhood of their former possessions. Failing an early opportunity of travelling in this manner, they intended to coast down the river as best they might, until striking off towards Dusseldorf they might thus perhaps gain safely the frontiers of Holland. But this was a doubtful probability under the present circumstances of those countries, where unlicensed bands of soldiers still made predatory war, and which abounded with armed adventurers of all degrees of infamy. Great therefore was their disappointment, on reaching the village at the foot of the Drachenfels, to find that no boat of any kind was on the point of starting in the desired direction, nor was there any likelihood of such arriving for several days, as the commerce of the Rhine was at that early season scanty and irregular, on account of the obstructions to navigation offered by the floating ice, which was borne towards the sea in cumbrous and at times dangerous masses.

"But," said the sturdy taverner at whose house they had obtained some refreshment and their principal information, "if ye be pressed for time, there is a fine opportunity now offering itself, as you may see, turning round the bend of Oberwinter above there, and coming towards us as if for your special accommodation."

Truchses looked anxiously in the direction pointed out, and saw slowly coming down with the current one of those immense and island-looking rafts of timber, peculiar to the Rhine; constructed of huge trunks of trees fastened strongly together, the produce of the German forests thus sent forward towards the sea chiefly for the purposes of ship-building. The raft, of

enormous length and requiring a crew, so to call it, of several hundred men, presented the appearance of a populous floating village. Many cabins, loosely built of rough planks, were to be seen, with evidences of ample provender for the voyage, in live and dead stock, wine-casks, and every necessary appendage of cookery, on a rude but profuse scale.

Truchses and Agnes looked upon the approaching uncouth and comfortless but secure conveyance ; and then on each other, in silent hesitation.

“ That is the very thing for your purpose,” cried their rough-spoken informant, “ as ye do not seem over-nice or over-rich. The foresters and river-rangers who compose the company are not, to be sure, the most refined of God’s creatures, but they are honest fellows, who pull their huge oars and sing in good measure all day, and sleep at night, too sound to disturb their passengers. I strongly recommend ye to push off in yon little boat and board the raft as it passes ; you will easily make a bargain, and not repent of my counsel. Well, well, it is right that every man decides for himself — if his wife will but let him — in this frost-nipped world of ours. Take your choice, good master, of that ready raft or a rough walk. For you have no chance of a boat ; and it would cost more than you strike me as being apt to find convenient for a horse and waggon from hence to Westhofen, where you say you are bound to. Besides, it is certain that all at this side of the river from Bonn to Paffenmutze are by this time engaged, for the baggage and kitchen-battery of our glorious Elector Ernest, God bless and preserve his highness ! who goes to-day to a great carouse at Schwarzmundorf, to meet the noble Count Nuenar and the rest of the protestant party of the chapter, who have sent in their submission and obtained full pardon.”

No more was wanting to decide Truchses on his course. With feelings of fresh bitterness thus involuntarily aroused, and a conviction of the necessity of instant escape from the danger of discovery, his mind was made up. His great objection to the proposed means of voyaging was repugnance to associate his delicate and now more than ever dear helpmate with its rude company and rough accommodation. But one glance from her eyes expressed a whole volume of thought, and Ghebhard now knew that language too well to be in doubt of its full meaning. Within a quarter of an hour they were freely

admitted, and lodged in one of the small huts which dotted the surface of the huge raft, as passengers, on moderate terms of expense, and with a promise of the best treatment within the means of the amphibious proprietors to bestow.

The life of our hero and heroine is now only to be traced in broken fragments of adventures. The continuous flow of narrative would be inappropriate to describe the now turbid current of their career, which is henceforward to be found marked on the page of history or in traditional legends, with brief but graphic sketches.

The raft went on its silent way along the deep broad stream for several days and nights. The cloak-wrapped figures of Ghebhard and Agnes may be pictured by fancy as they sat at the opened casement of their wooden crib; and their minds' workings may be guessed at, as they gazed, he sternly, she placidly, on the passing objects of the river's leftward bank. Towns, palaces, churches, extensive forests and the broad champaign, all once his own! the living beings, too, who so lately owned his sway and paid him homage, now as indifferent to his fate as they were unconscious of his presence! It was a sad and serious trial. But, like all those which went before, he bore it with the lofty resignation worthy a great mind. He often sat for hours during that dreary voyage, conscious that Agnes was beside him, but, saving that surety to his present existence, lost in a wide abstraction, as he mechanically listened to the regular splash of the hundred ponderous oars which served as a mighty rudder to keep the raft in its right course, and to the hymns of simple melody which the navigators sang in wild yet well-timed chorus. At length the territory of Cologne was passed—and the last steeple of its frontier village faded on Ghebhard's aching sight—he turned his looks to the long and dreary flat that spread out at either side of the river on his forward course—and he bade adieu for ever to even the recollection of what he had lost, which until then he had lingeringly yet unconsciously clung to.

The raft had now reached the country of Cleves. It had been found frequently necessary to pause and even to stop for a whole day together, from the serious obstacles and the dangers at times presented by the accumulated blocks of ice, and the unwieldly dimension of this ark, from which our woe-sick wanderers had scarcely heart enough to send out one faint

hope, to seek for a token that the flood of their misfortunes had subsided.

The desolate aspect of the country now proved that war was familiar to its plains. Abandoned villages, a hut or castle in ruins, an absence of all the cheerful signs of peace and prosperity, were the now constant proofs; and at times a roving band of marauders stared at the raft from the river's banks, and gazed with hungry eyes at its stores of provender, the seizure of which their scanty numbers forbade them to attempt. But one night, after the great grappling-irons and chains had moored the timber-raft to the bank, and all its numerous occupants, with the exception of the small night-watch, having retired to their huts, a sudden and irresistible attack was made on it by a numerous detachment from one of the independent bands, calling themselves soldiers of the faith and auxiliaries of Spain. Plunder was the sole object of those brigand warriors. Ere daylight every possible object of utility was carried on shore; and then, in the mere wantonness of rapine, the destroyers loosened the cords and grapplings which had bound the timbers together, and in a few hours the whole collected labours of many months, the product of large capital and great industry, the subsistence of hundreds, was let loose upon the chafed waters. The loud lamentations of the poor foresters who had embarked their all in this enterprise, and the more violent wailings of the women and children who formed part of the cargo, were only matter of mockery, and provocation to abuse and ill treatment, on the part of the spoliators. And as Ghebbard and Agnes stood on the damp bleak shore, and saw the planks break asunder from the cabin which had for so many days given them shelter and security, they felt as though another pang of suffering had severed them from their last association of home.

The persons of the raft's company, our hero and heroine being included in that levelling epithet, became next the objects of spoliation. They were rifled of every available thing in money, dress, or trinkets. The nature of the latter found upon Agnes and Truchses, and their whole bearing under the operations of their plunderers, showed them to be persons, formerly at least, of more elevated station than they passed for. But in those days of rapine, disguise and false pretences were the common shifts of so many high-born un-

fortunates, that it attracted little curiosity, although in the present instance it secured some small consideration at the hands of the ruffian adventurers. Truchses was offered protection and subsistence as long as he chose to remain in company with the band. A rapier was given him for his protection against other robbers, a horse lent for the accommodation of Agnes, they were served with daily rations of such coarse provisions as the marauders succeeded in procuring for themselves; and he was thus spared the necessity of robbing for his existence, as many of the destitute foresters and boatmen were obliged to do, while they followed the route of their captors across the territory of Brabant.

Holland was still the great point of all Ghebbard's views. He found it now impossible to penetrate to that land of hard-won liberty by the Belgian frontier, which was strongly occupied by the army of the Duke of Parma, both in garrisons and in the field, now that the winter began to break and the season for warlike operations being again at hand. The only feasible chance was to gain the coast of Flanders and thence by some fortunate accident contrive a sea-passage to a Dutch port. With this object all hardships were borne with patience and courage, the sufferers never losing the reciprocal anxiety which kept each in activity and taught them endurance, solely for the sake of the other.

After many hardships and risks, the greater part of Belgium was traversed in this way, before Truchses found an opportunity of breaking off from the companionship of his soldier protectors; and it was owing to the rude sense of honour of one of those that he obtained the restitution of his money and one of Agnes's diamond rings, which he now carefully secreted as a reserve fund for some future emergency. By winding paths of perilous adventure the wanderers at length reached that part of Flanders between Lille and the Pays de Calais, afterwards joined to France by the conquests of Louis XIII.; and they were so far working their way slowly towards the coast, when, almost worn out by fatigue and agitation—for his still active mind now suffered tortures in the contemplation of his wife's privations—he was taken suddenly ill, by an attack of the deadly malady of the Low Countries, known centuries later to mourning and indignant England by the title of the "Walcheren fever."

The first assault of this insidious pest was sharp but brief ; and after a few days' suffering the patient arose well, as he and his fond partner vainly thought, and they made light of this feeble effort of the climate against his robust and manly frame. The scene of this, the first illness ever endured by Ghebhard Truchses, was the ruin-remnants of Therouenne, the ancient capital of a wide district in ages gone by, but which the fierce vengeance of the Emperor Charles V. had some thirty years previously, utterly razed out from the list of cities. Scarcely a stone was left standing upon another of all that formed the ramparts, the gates, the buildings of this once populous town ; and of its thousands of inhabitants not a score were now left to linger on the site of their former dwellings, and find mementoes of past enjoyments in the present desolation. It was in a wretched house of entertainment, in the waste ground which had been occupied by one of the former suburbs, and in which Ghebhard and Agnes had made their resting-place at this stage of their pilgrimage, that he sank under the first onset of his malady. And as he recovered sufficient strength to walk daily out in the reviving air of spring time, leaning on his helpmate's arm, the scattered ruins were the favourite places of resort. There they could draw at every turn new lessons of resignation and benevolence ; for the reflection that they were not alone in their destitution, taught them to feel for others through the medium of their own distress.

As Truchses became daily convalescent he and Agnes used to prolong their evening rambles, and sometimes the bright May-moon caught them still lingering in the ruins, walking on some level place where the smooth sward covered, perhaps, the site of a palace or a temple, or sitting on some pillar's fragment, and gazing on the fantastic forms shadowed out on the earth by the remnants of crumbling walls. As they thus sat one evening, later than usual, tempted by the mild air which almost breathed in summer softness, a thick cloud suddenly obscured the moon, and, warned by the darkness that it was actual night, they were about to retire to their poor and cheerless lodging, when their attention was excited by the cautious advance of two men, lighted by a small lantern which one of them drew out from beneath his cloak. He was lank and more than middle-aged, of unprepossessing looks, half mystic, half miserly. His long beard and thin mustachios of almost flaxen hair gave

a peculiar air of weakness to a countenance which was otherwise strongly marked with a harsh but still vigorous cast. Truchses at once knew this person from his general appearance to be English.

His companion was a decided contrast. He was short and thick, bloated and rubicund, with twinkling eyes and a most uncomely visage. He seemed half drunk, and was supported in his tottering passage across the fragments of stone and brick-work by a thin iron rod, which was too long for the purposes of a walking-staff, and a curious appurtenance to so strange looking a figure.

"Now, Edward," said the first mentioned of those associates, in English, which was understood by Truchses, but not by Agnes, "now strike the divining rod three times with a vigorous stroke — let it tingle to the earth's bowels, and rouse up Madimi, my old familiar. This is the place."

"I doubt that, good doctor, and my learned master," replied the other. "No man could have been fool enough to bury treasures under such a villanous mass of rubbish — and as for Madimi, he won't come till you pull out the crystal from your pouch."

"Here it is, unbeliever! Place it to thy bloodshot eye and tell me what thou seest."

"See! why I see flames and fiery tongues, but no angels to-night. Holloa! holloa, my master. There, they are coming up and out fast and faster — but I cannot see them clearly yet for the mist. The incantation, doctor, the incantation!"

The other then chanted in a harsh and monotonous tone:—

*"Per virtutem illorum qui invocant nomen tuum,
Hermeli, mitte nobis tres angelos.*

Are they coming?"

"No angels, no angels."

"Ah, how could it be expected in thy lewd and deboshed presence? Tell quickly, good Edward, what dost thou see?"

"I see fourteen creatures of divers evil-favoured shapes, some like monkeys, some like dogs, some very hairy monstrous men. They are scratching each other by the face. Ha, there is Madimi. He brands the fourteen in the forehead — they go downward, downward, downward! There comes a thing like a great wind and plucks them away by the feet."

"How dost feel, good Edward?"

"Marvellous light and giddy i' the brain. I seem to be empty and a burning thirst scorches my throat and palate."

"Thou art eased of a great burden, Edward. I will speak a word for thee to Madimi—*Gil de pragma Kures hilech.*"

"What is that to say, oh, most erudite doctor?"

"Why, *volumus his in nostris habitare.*"

"Humph! does it promise a gift?"

"Oh, thou profane one, thy sordid notion drives the spirit away. Vale, Vale, Madimi!"*

The bewildered novice on whom this mystification was practised here stumbled and fell among the rubbish; and while his companion endeavoured to pick him up, the arrival of a third person added to Ghebhard's curiosity and proved a relief to the burlesque of the scene. This was a young man of fine and showy person, richly habited according to the luxurious fashion of the times, though evidently associated with the others in some business of real or pretended mystery. Leaving the fallen man to sprawl his way from among the rubbish as well as he could, the elder actor in the foregoing colloquy gave his whole attention to some whispered communication from the new-comer. The latter at length said loud enough to be heard by Truchses,

"Come this way then, doctor, and we can talk it over."

"I am ready," replied the other, "to listen to your lordship's advice, for though young in years you are indeed of a precece capacity for political intrigue."

"Hold, gentlemen," said Truchses;—and as he spoke and came forward a step or two, the old man lifted up his lantern, the young man clapped his hand on his sword—"I must not overhear ye further. I understand your language, and would not listen to your secrets."

"Sir," said the young stranger, after a slight pause and with an air of chivalric good breeding, "I would not wish a secret of mine own in better keeping than that of a man so

* For original specimens of this kind of jargon between Dr. Dee and his follower or associate Edward Kelly and the spirits they raised, the reader must consult the folio volume of Dee's Visions, edited by Meric Casaubon, 1659. But other and more rational records of his erudition and industry are to be found in the Cottonian and Ashmodean collections. A minute description of his person (in which fancy perhaps had a greater hand than fact) is given in Spindler's wild and powerful work *Der Bastard*, in which this celebrated necromancer, astrologer, and political intriguer, plays a much more important part than in our tale.

honourable and delicate as this conduct proves you. And did not the purport of our conversation touch on higher matters than mere personal concerns, I would not scruple to communicate it to you."

At this too candid admission, the old man severely pinched his companion's arm, and in his turn he addressed Truchses, keenly eyeing him and Agnes under the light which he contrived to throw in their faces.

"Yes, worthy stranger, we have a serious mission to fulfil, in propitiating the good angels who watch over the labours of the great in faith but weak in spirit — perhaps you are here on the same purposes as ourselves?"

"I doubt it, doctor — you will excuse my familiarly giving you your title. You seek treasures, and in striving to raise a spirit have as yet only succeeded in throwing down a man," replied Truchses, with a smile — a faint one, for he suddenly felt the concentrated effects of his imprudent exposure to the night air, in a violent fever fit.

"Whatever be *your* purpose," said the young stranger, "you at least have succeeded better than my venerable friend, for you *have* an angel by your side."

Agnes blushed at the emphatic looks which accompanied the compliment, though she did not understand the words it was conveyed in.

"You are right, sir, — she is, indeed," said Ghebhard, who had learned the humility of permitting a compliment — even a common-place one — to be paid to his wife, a thing which in his palmy days of pride he would not have suffered. But he also felt that in present circumstances it would be hard to keep from her whatever might come of good, even so poor an offering as a phrase of gallantry. He translated the stranger's flattering words. She calmly listened, and replied,

"Then let me prove a guardian angel, my beloved, and lead you home. You look flushed, yet you tremble like an aspen. Come, my husband — wish a good night to these gentlemen, and say for me that I am sorry my ignorance of their language forces me to do as much by proxy."

"Madam," said the young stranger, in courtly French, "although I do not speak *your* language sufficiently to express more than the merest phrase of commonplace — and I would not willingly address such to you — I know it enough to com-

prehend your courtesy, and you will pardon me perhaps for taking it for granted that you understand that which I now make the medium of my respectful leave-taking."

A hurried acknowledgment, spoken in French as pure as his own, and some graceful expressions of courtesy convinced him of what he had already believed, that Agnes and her companion were persons of station far different from what their dress announced. Perceiving the evident suffering of Truchses, who required more effective aid than the arm of his agitated wife, the stranger proffered his assistance across the rough impediments of the path. It was accepted; and as they moved along (the elder man, with the inebriate neophyte having already retired from the scene) Agnes expressed her grateful sense of his kindness, so unexpected to persons he had never seen before.

"In truth, madam," replied he, "it is a service scarcely meriting thanks, though it be done by one who had never till now beheld you; yet I cannot quite believe such to be the case, for if the limner has not done great flattery to another person, I have seen duplicates of your likeness, though perhaps not meant for you."

"You utter an enigma, sir, which I cannot propound," said Agnes.

"I can, though," observed Ghebhard; "my kind young supporter here alludes to portraits of the prisoner of Fothringay."

"I do, indeed," — said the stranger — "and though I never saw the beautiful and unhappy Queen of Scots, I can now fancy her before me, as she might have looked and moved some dozen years back."

"Sir, the resemblance is an oft-remarked and singular one — and perhaps not much less true in fortune than in person."

Truchses spoke the latter part of this sentence in an undertone. The stranger caught the words notwithstanding; and he could not suppress a sudden start, and a stare at the lovely woman who caused his emotion, and whom the broad moonlight now showed more plainly than even his companion's lantern had done, and he involuntarily exclaimed,

"Yes! there can be no doubt of it."

Ghebhard Truchses was the next morning in the violent paroxysm of a bad relapse. The strangers had, fortunately

for him — if the prolonging of his life was now indeed a blessing — humanity on one hand and skill on the other. The younger at twenty years of age, had evidently the upper-hand with his companion of threescore. All his suggestions were acted on by his experienced companion, with a deferential acquiescence which he strove to gloss over into the appearance of friendly condescension. But the youth evidently knew his own influence. He had all the ready-formed manners of the great world. He avowed to Agnes that the interest which she had excited — for he knew her from her far-bruited likeness to Mary Stuart — had caused him to put off his departure from the neighbourhood of this chance-meeting. He spoke freely, but not too incautiously, of his and his companion's affairs, which he confessed to be of a political tendency, and by no means of the absurd nature which the necessity of concealment had forced them to pretend. He revealed the names of his companions, Doctor Dee and Edward Kelly — but he studiously concealed his own, which the others did not attempt to betray. He ordered the doctor to devote his whole skill to the cure of Ghebhard, and the order was obeyed with alacrity and success ; for though Dee was not by profession a medical man, yet his vast knowledge and extraordinary practice embraced physic in the widely extended range of scientific study.

Several days of constant intercourse created as much intimacy between Agnes and the young man as she could venture to allow herself with a person who could not or would not reveal his name and situation, while he had become from her own admission well acquainted with hers. Dee had called him "my lord," in Ghebhard's hearing, and he did not deny his title. The very nature of his rank was a further cause for reserve ; yet there was something so frank, so cordial, and so elegant in his whole conduct and manner, that she could not withhold her confidence, or entirely conceal her admiration. He professed warmly yet seriously his sympathy with her and Ghebhard's misfortunes, and he spoke in a tone of confident conviction of his future power to help them, in a way of tenfold value to his then scanty means of service.

In the mean time Ghebhard recovered from this new attack. It lasted, like the former one, about ten days, but it left him more enfeebled and more susceptible to another. This, how-

ever, he knew not ; or if his skilful leech gave him warning to that effect, he forgot it in the flushed animation of returning health. He had frequently seen and conversed with the young stranger in the hours of exemption from intense pain and the debilitating symptoms of his illness. There was nothing contagious in it. It is the curse of the climate, not the infection of nature. Truchses had therefore no direct apprehension for his wife or his new friend, as the penalty of their care of him, and so upheld, he made light of his malady. The comfort of a generous mind to feel for and with one in illness and distress is an enjoyment beyond price. The delight of affording sympathy and succour to the unfortunate and meritorious comes next to it. No man is truly destitute while he can possess the first, none wholly worthless till he is insensible to the latter.

Truchses was once more able to go into the air and take exercise—and thus again in the way of fresh imprudence and a new attack. But before this happened—and the intervals were regular between each relapse—he had by the unwearied care of his young friend, for such he fully felt and acknowledged him, gained securely the great object of his late exertions, a conveyance to the coast ; and he had taken places on board a country vessel engaged in the trade then winked at between the still hostile states of Flanders and Holland. The young man, whose influence had procured safe conduct and protection through the military district they traversed, accompanied our hero and heroine to the sea-side ; and at the very moment before the sailing of the little craft to which they now committed themselves, he took a ring from his finger, and presented it to Agnes.

“ This, madam,” said he, with all the noble emotion of youthful sensibility, “ this is the valued token of a lost mother’s love. Let me offer it to you, not merely as a remembrance of friendship, but as a solemn pledge of utmost service if ever the time should come, as I fully reckon, that I may have power equal to my will to do good to your noble husband or yourself. My prayer to Heaven is that you may never need my aid, but that you may find a harbour of honourable safety in the free land you are now bound to, and with the great and good man who rules over it. But if all else fail, I shall be stanch and steady—depend on me—and the ring which is the warrant of my truth may, upon inquiry, lead you to a knowledge of the

donor. Farewell, my friends ! Heaven bless and protect you — Farewell, farewell !”

Truchses repeated the warm-hearted leave-taking, but Agnes could do no more than make signs of her deep-felt concurrence in all her husband said. “Alas ! alas ! for the world’s wanderers,” thought she, “to meet chance friends only to lose them when made ! to have no time to form a lasting attachment—no certainty of ever again seeing those we love, or wish to love ! Oh, better to settle in some narrow nook, with one or two firm-bound companions, whose interests, feelings, and tastes grow into fellowship, if they are not by nature the same. Why is not this *our* lot ? But Heaven’s will be done !”

Three days more brought the fugitives to the little town of Delft, safe and unharmed. The young stranger had given them a supply of money, for which Truchses insisted on his accepting Agnes’s ring, as security. Delicacy forbade his refusing the pledge ; and in his romantic feeling of regard and admiration—but let no reader be mistaken, there was not a spark of *love* in it—he heartily hoped it would never be redeemed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE arrival at Delft was indeed like sailing into a safe harbour after enduring the worst fury of the wind and waves. The gratitude of Ghebhard and Agnes, first to Heaven and next to their invaluable English friend, was very great. They felt as if the term of their long suffering was now reached. As they moved along the canal in the little boat from Rotterdam, where they had first made land, they felt the dull, flat scene to be the perfection of natural beauty, for it promised rest, the great object of their longings. The trim formality of Delft itself, the narrow quays and quiet canal, the grave-looking and unmolested storks perched on the chimney-tops, or flitting on broad wings over the town, all struck them as most original but happy symbols of the fate they had before them ; and the contrast between all they now saw with the insecurity

of the country they had lately passed through, and the perturbed state of their own, filled them with a pious and delighted wonder.

The reception they met with from the Prince of Orange and his amiable wife, the daughter of Coligny, was one of tender and benevolent welcome. William of Nassau was a model in domestic life as well as a hero in politics and war. His calmness of mind and unfailing courage, his clear views, his public energy, his personal moderation have no parallels in modern history, except Washington in fact, and La Fayette in theory. By such a man as this a character like that of Truchses was sure to be appreciated; while the beauty, the youth and the misfortunes of Agnes formed a passport to his best sympathies. He immediately gave them apartments in his house, and for the first few days after their arrival, all went on smoothly, happily, and well. But the demon of disease was deep lodged in Ghebhard's constitution, and the fatal neighbourhood of stagnant waters and low plains brought its malignant agencies into full action once more. Scarcely installed in the mansion of his immortal friend and protector, he was again seized with a relapse of fever more violent than his former attacks. He had now all possible aid from science and every accessory comfort that could assuage his sufferings. He therefore bore them with his usual fortitude, and he looked confidently forward to a prompt enjoyment of the society of his noble-hearted host, to a complete renovation of his own health, and the final accomplishment of his worldly hopes.

These soothing expectations soon met an afflicting overthrow; and all liberal Europe had quickly to mourn an event that posterity itself looks back on with dismay and horror. On the 10th of June 1584, a couple of days after Ghebhard's renewed illness, William of Nassau with his wife, and his sister the Princess of Swartzenberg, were sitting after dinner, Agnes being as usual in close attendance on her sick husband above, when an individual demanded an audience from the stadtholder, who, with the usual simplicity of conduct which greatness only may adopt, immediately rose from table and left the room. In a minute the report of a pistol was heard. The wife and sister rushed to the door, and found the glorious liberator of his country, the immortal patriot, weltering in his blood. The assassin's hand was more steady and his aim

more sure than those of the other villain who some years previously had inflicted a grievous wound on the prince. In a few seconds the great, good man expired, his last words being, "Oh, my poor country!"

This important drama of history is but a brief episode in our tale. All the prospects of Ghebhard were now again overcast. His protector was no more. The public confusion consequent on his murder, the youthful age of his son and successor Prince Maurice, then only sixteen, and the exigencies of the national affairs left no chance of attention being paid to the interests of a ruined and health-broken man like Truchses. He was not, however, left destitute by the government on which devolved the heavy burden of public affairs. He was allowed the means of subsistence and a secure residence in the country of his adoption; and had his constitution not been broken by his frequent-recurring disease he might have quietly run the rest of his course among a people then ennobled by the finest traits of heroism. In the intervals of his illness he travelled about from place to place for change of air, its greatest assuagement; or when at rest he gave himself up wholly to the varied literary studies for which he had been in early life so distinguished, and he wrote much in prose and verse, philosophy mixing with poetry in bright and serious combination. In all things, at all times, Agnes was his consolation and his counsellor. To her good taste, her steady judgment, her subdued enthusiasm he owed much; and every day brought to light new treasures from a mind that could embrace all subjects, and on which every fresh circumstance produced a new effect.

Full five years of calm existence thus rolled on, an apparent blank in our heroine's life, but filled up in reality with many a solace. Ghebhard had become acclimated (to adopt a foreign word), and the deleterious elements of fog and damp at length found him proof against their power. The elastic spring of life was gone for ever. The fine flush of health had left his cheek. His brilliant look was dimmed; but his mind was unimpaired, his temper softened, and his knowledge of mankind enlarged. And thus he might have gone on had not the instinct longing for home, the love of the father-land, where so little was left to claim his love, still kept fast hold of him. He had maintained a constant intercourse by letter

with his brother, and Agnes on her part with both of hers, as soon as the sanctuary was reached whence there was no danger of compromising their friends. The project of a return to Germany and of procuring some benefice in any of the Protestant states, was thus always kept alive ; but without the interference of some powerful monarch in Ghebhard's favour, no chance of success appeared.

Agnes had her mind's eye constantly fixed on England ; and she watched anxiously the eventful news which every new year brought from that great country. She looked on the character of Elizabeth with a mixture of astonishment and fear. The execution of Mary Stuart in 1587, the defeat of the armada in the following year, the mixed ingredients of the mind that commanded the first and presided over the latter, formed an appalling subject for female contemplation ; and Agnes scarcely knew whether to attempt or shrink from an appeal to the virgin queen on behalf of her husband and herself. Bitterly did she regret having lost the young Englishman's ring, in the confusion of removal from Delft, immediately after the Prince of Orange's murder, and in the midst of Ghebhard's cruel sufferings both of mind and body. She was thus deprived of all clue to the renewal of the acquaintanceship on which she had so much reckoned. Of Doctor Dee she had made frequent inquiries through the English residents in Holland, but could only learn vague reports of his total degradation and disgrace, and that from having been the prime agent in various political missions, and even the instructor of Elizabeth herself in the far-sought mysteries of astrology, he had sunk into such complete insignificance as to be quite lost to the world.

Great then was Agnes's pleasure on examining one day a miscellaneous collection of papers, trinkets, and fragments, (such as are common to all travellers who often change their abode, and who live in a constant alternation of losing, seeking, and finding,) to discover the very identical ring, so long deplored, and so simply coming to light that it was only wonderful it could have been so often overlooked. Agnes did not lose time in surmises as to the cause of its disappearance, nor did she quite attribute its discovery to supernatural interference. Yet she felt as if her husband ought to have looked on it with his old respect for omens ; and she lamented deeply

the indifference with which he received her joyous intimation of this good luck, and the air of chilling doubt with which he listened to her sanguine expectations from the now probable discovery of their English friend. For the first time she regretted the utter change that had passed over his once ardent and superstitious temperament, and she now felt sure that he had indeed lost all hope in fortune, all confidence in man.

Elated far beyond her usual constitutional wont, she repaired to an individual well versed in the intricate combinations of medals, seals, devices, and heraldic bearings, and she submitted to his inspection her mystic token of certain good to come. Her heart bounded with hitherto unknown joy, when this cunning antiquary pronounced the bauble to be a signet ring of the ancient and noble house of Devereux, clearly cut, and plainly bearing the family arms — the three torteauxes in chief; the talbot's head argent, eared gules; the reindeer gorged with a ducal coronet; the motto, "*Virtutis comes invidia*;" and when, upon due consideration, there could be no doubt but that it had belonged to and was given to Agnes by no less a personage than Robert Earl of Essex, the then all-powerful favourite of Elizabeth of England! Every inquiry confirmed this glad conviction, for her recollections of the young stranger tallied perfectly with what she now learned of his age and his personal appearance, as well as with what was known to all Europe of his chivalric and romantic character.

It was indeed this remarkable man who had so generously and so disinterestedly interposed between our hero and heroine, and the fate under which but for him Ghebhard had in all probability succumbed. Essex was on that occasion a voluntary associate with Doctor Dee in the last of his many secret political missions to Flanders, and principally to the Duke of Parma then governor-general of the Spanish possessions in the Netherlands. The young ambition of Essex had even then aimed at the succession to the post of favourite so unworthily held by the craven recreant Leicester, and though scorning the character to which his own was in every way repugnant, he on all possible occasions followed his example in conduct which could not compromise his honour and might make his fortune. He felt that the attainment of political knowledge, and most particularly foreign information, were the main accomplishments for him who would stand first in

the favour of the queen. He therefore easily made the acquaintance of Dee, and by irresistible inducements persuaded him to associate him in his secret doings. Dee, who was a mercenary as well as a clever man, who carried his charlatanism in his peculiar line as far perhaps as Jerome Scotus himself in his, had foresight enough to mark the rising influence of Essex before it was evident to the public eye ; like that rarely-organized individual in our own days, who has the faculty of knowing the distant approach of a ship, by some strange sympathy of vision with the light's refraction, long before the object is seen by others on the horizon.

The sagacity of Essex, in his stolen and profoundly secret visits to the continent with his accomplished tutor, was turned to invaluable account as he became more intimately known to his royal mistress. His advancement to the highest possible place in her favour was rapid beyond parallel, after the death of Leicester in 1588. His chivalrous conduct in the Lisbon expedition, the following year, seemed the crowning circumstance of his influence ; but it was not until his duel with Sir Charles Blount in 1590 that the tyrant fondness of " the sweete floure of amiable virginittie " (as our motto has it) found full vent ; and it was just at this critical epoch of Essex's life and fortunes that Agnes made the discovery which we have just recorded. She did not hesitate one moment in the course to be pursued. Relying with unwonted enthusiasm on the generous sincerity of Essex, and with undoubting certainty on his influence with Elizabeth, she resolved to set off at once for England, to lay at the feet of the great queen through the intercession of her irresistible favourite, the claims of Ghebbard Truchses on her protection and influence ; and visions of long happiness to come floated in magic succession on our heroine's not easily excited brain.

The peremptory tenderness with which she made known her intention to her husband admitted no denial or remonstrance on his part. He offered none ; for he could not avoid being tinged with the bright colouring which shed itself so broadly over her hopes. And so, with brief preparation, and an elated heart, she proceeded under Ghebbard's convoy to the sea-side, and took her passage in a trading vessel bound from Amsterdam to London. For the first time in her life she was now a voyager, alone and under Heaven's protection ; and for the first

time since his marriage Ghebhard was now left behind, to a sad and solitary home, only cheered by the memory of his wife's unrivalled excellence, and the passionate longing for her return, which seemed to keep her at all moments present before his eyes, as she was irrecoverably fixed in his heart.

After the lapse of three days, not remarkable either for the infliction of or the exemption from sufferings, such as a sea voyage is ever marked by to the unaccustomed and delicate, Agnes found herself, with wonder and delight, far up the river Thames ; and in due time she was safely landed on the populous quay of old London.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE buoyancy of mind which Agnes felt on her own account prevented the depression which she might perhaps have sunk under, had she only dwelt on the chances of success, or the possibility of disappointment, founded on the character of the extraordinary woman on whose decision her own and her husband's fate now depended. But alive in the most acute degree to the sentiment of awe, and the repugnant shrinking which such a character as Elizabeth's must even in that age have inspired in any truly feminine mind, she was far more disposed to rest on the certainty of the steady friendship to be looked to from Essex, and she had not the remotest idea of any thing standing in the way of its exercise. In this mood she suffered none of the minor agitation which in a less inspiring tone of feeling might have attended on the novelty of her situation, alone in a strange land, for her one Dutch hand-maiden could be of small protection in necessity, and liable to all the doubtful construction so likely to be put on the conduct of a beautiful and unprotected foreigner, whose avowed purpose was a visit to the most gallant and powerful nobleman in England. Her own industry and the assiduous instruction of her husband had removed one great obstruction to the execution of her enterprise. She had during her residence in Holland learned English, which she had found frequent occasions of speaking, with

various diplomatic agents, merchants and others who constantly passed over from London to the Low Countries, as well as with English officers in the military service of Prince Maurice. She could express herself with fluency in the most intricate conversation, and understand perfectly even much of the idiomatic quaintness with which the language then abounded. No sooner, therefore, had she passed through the necessary forms on landing, being duly provided with all the required documents, than she made inquiries at the hostel where she engaged a lodging, for the best and readiest way of proceeding to Essex House, where she soon ascertained that the wounded, but now convalescent earl, was to be found.

"Why, mistress, replied the worshipful host of the Rose and Falcon, "the best way, and the readiest, is to put your comely person into one of the boats that wait at the Tower stairs, hard by, and to row up the river with the tide, which will be running fast westward for an hour to come. Once at Essex House, those handsome features will be a sure passport to his lordship; and, beshrew me! I much doubt if he will be in a hurry to let them out o' the portal as fast as they will ha' gotten into the presence-chamber. But be satisfied, my mistress, you will have as good quarters there, to say the least, as those you have left behind you with the mynheers of Amsterdam, or as you could expect even with your humble servant, Roger Ryecroft, host of the Rose and Falcon."

Agnes fully comprehended these inuendoes, but her mind was not to be ruffled nor its purport turned aside; and the shrewd publican saw at once that the blush on her cheek was neither of guilt nor shame. He consequently gave the most obsequious attention to her wants and wishes; and was pleased at her expressing her intention of occupying the chamber allotted to her, into which she ordered her baggage to be deposited, as a proof that her visit to Essex House was not intended to be of the lasting nature he had surmised.

When Agnes re-appeared, after having taken some refreshment, modestly clad in a suit of black, with few ornaments, and those not chosen for gaudy display, Roger Ryecroft was struck with still greater admiration and renewed respect; and he escorted her to the stairs, and saw her safe into the boat, which was one of his own selection; and gave strict charge to the boatman, who bore the badge of the Westminster Water

Company, to take especial care of the worshipful lady who intrusted herself to his skill and civility ; intimating that she was of high quality and of much consideration in the eyes of his noble eminence, " the queen's earl " (as the public emphatically called him), whom she was going to visit.

The residence of the Earl of Essex, with its gardens, occupied the situation of the street that at present bears his name, and had two separate entrances, one opening to the Strand, and the other on the river. It was by the latter that Agnes made her approach, with a light step, a confident spirit, but a palpitating heart. No misgiving as to the earl's remembrance of her crossed her mind ; but she reflected that he was no longer a boy of undeveloped aspirations, but a man, whose full-grown greatness made an abrupt and uncereemonious intrusion upon him a somewhat hazardous step. His pride might have grown in proportion with his power ; and he might, after the first cordial recognition, look on her, perhaps, as too bold and too troublesome a petitioner. But the risk, thought she, must now be run, and she had only to trust to chance for the result of her enterprise. But no notion crossed her mind of any personal feeling mixing with the views of Essex, either as to his consideration of her, or as to his opinion relative to her conduct with regard to him.

She was received and admitted at " the watergate " with respectful assiduity by the porter and serving-men on duty there — all the establishment of Essex House being taught to give a most gracious reception to every visitor of the fair sex — and she proceeded under the guidance of one of the badged and liveried servitors, straightway through the gardens to the mansion. Introduced by him into a lodge close to the garden portico, which led directly to the steward's apartments. She was accommodated with a cushioned chair in a private chamber, looking out on the way by which she had approached. The old grey-headed functionary, who occupied the post of keeper of " the ladies' lodge," was in every respect suited to his situation. A tone of court-bred propriety distinguished his manners. He asked no impertinent questions, gave no intrusive glances, nor seemed to have any curiosity as to " the whereabouts " of the female inquirers after his noble master ; but, sending his granddaughter, a neat, lively girl, to attend on our heroine during his absence, he hobbled off to announce to

Sir Gilley Merrick, the steward, the new-comer, who declined giving her name, but required, if possible, to have speech with the earl.

Whatever might be the outward show of deference paid to the sex by the servitors of the gallant Essex, there was naturally no restriction in their conversational comments, when out of the presence of each fair expectant who from various motives sought his patronage. The pompous steward, therefore, was in no hurry to grant an audience to the unattended, modestly-adorned, and foreign-accented lady whom the lodge-keeper had described with his accustomed minuteness. Essex was, besides, fully occupied in receiving the visits of his many friends, who now, it being after the dinner hour, poured in from both entrances to beset the household with inquiries for "the very dear and noble lord," for whom the queen's tenderness was well known to be overflowing during the last two days, though she had affected a good deal of satisfaction at the news of his discomfiture and the check to his pride, so lately received at the hands of Sir Charles Blount. Agnes was therefore left for a considerable time in a somewhat annoying state of suspense, which was however made lighter from the kind and lively attentions of the old man's granddaughter, who talked incessantly, and amused her not a little with the gossiping particulars of the earl's doings, the late duel, and reports of various kinds connected with the court, and the favourite's influence over the queen, magnified, if possible, by the garrulous girl, in honour of the noble house of Essex, to which she considered herself a very graceful appendage.

She also pointed out to Agnes among the visitors who came in their barges and approached the house by the gardens, the Earl of Southampton, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, Littleton of Frankley, Sir Charles Davers, and others of note among the earl's particular friends. So that our heroine became in a couple of hours acquainted with the persons, and initiated into the histories of some of the *élite* of English rank and fashion.

At length Sir Gilley Merrick himself appeared before our heroine; and, with a most patronising tone of condescension, and with apologies for the delay, inquired her pleasure. This was easily explained—it was but a repetition of her former

demand. The steward made a considerable demur on her declining to give her name—which she did from the absolute motive of not knowing what name to give, with a chance of its being intelligible to Essex. That by which she and her husband had been known during their melancholy sojourn at Therouenne had doubtless escaped his memory, and it was at any rate too ignoble and harsh-sounding for the ears polite of his retainers ; and she did not like to commit to light comment either her husband's or her own real appellation. She faltered and hesitated, as the inquisitive steward pressed his request as being indispensable to her being admitted to the earl's presence. But on her intimating that she possessed a token which would no doubt prove a passport, and producing the signet-ring, the worthy knight changed his tone ; and, believing her now to be beyond scrutiny a lady high in his master's favour, he assured her of his profound devotion to her service, and of his anxiety to facilitate by all means the object of her desire. He therefore escorted her forthwith to an apartment in his own suite of rooms, a positive promotion from her waiting station in the ladies' lodge. Here she had, however, again to endure a considerable delay, while Sir Gilley retired to consult with Henry Cuff, the earl's confidential secretary, as to the feasibility of presenting the ring while Essex was so surrounded with his loving gossips and inquiring friends.

Left to herself again, Agnes began to suffer an undefined anxiety as to the termination of her adventure. With so many ceremonious difficulties between her and a mere audience of the master of all the state appurtenances which she had seen already, "What," thought she, "may not the man himself now be?" How self-proud, how presumptuous ! and, oh God, if after all I am wrong in my conjecture—if the young man who gave me the ring was some impostor—or even though a man of the rank we suppose him, still *not* Essex ! What more likely than that the pretended necromancer Dee should have been leagued with some associate rogue, who, possessed by chance of the signet-ring, has made use of it to carry on the easier some scheme of death ? But then, his noble bearing, his frank demeanour, his generous words ! could all these have been assumed ? Oh, how rashly I have undertaken a perilous task ! Alas ! my husband,

where was your once proud energy, your prompt perception, that would have seen at a glance the risk I was rushing on, and forbade this wild adventure.

Before this new and startling train of doubt could reach a height of serious agitation, the knight-steward re-appeared, with another person of a determined yet dissimulating mien, whose grave suit of black contrasted strongly with Sir Gilley's flashy attire, and who was formerly presented by the latter, as "his good friend Master Henry Cuff, the very breath of the Earl's most marvellous secrets, and a young man of the most approved discretion and eminent fitness for all confidential undertakings."

The subject of this panegyric seemed to take small heed of it; yet he bore it out in a measure by the matured and cautious terms in which he conveyed to Agnes his lord's earnest request that she would forthwith honour him with her presence in his withdrawing-room, lameness from an accident preventing his hurrying to Sir Gilley Merrick's apartments, to offer his homage and conduct her to a more worthy place of reception.

"But, sir," asked Agnes with a faltering voice, "are you sure that his lordship recognised the ring and remembered her to whom it was given?"

"Madam, my good lord never forgets a pledge, nor is any one who has had the happy fortune to see you once likely to forget his good luck."

"Nay, sir, but tell me truly what did his lordship say on getting back his signet-ring?"

"Pray, madam, let my duty be my excuse for putting forth no words of my honoured master's, but those he bade me to speak to you in his name. His lordship waits your coming with impatience. Let me have the happiness of tending you into his presence."

Agnes still hesitated. She knew not what question more to put, to relieve her anxiety. She trembled with the dreadful belief that she was going to meet a perfect stranger — yet how to retreat? Once more her natural courage and graceful self-confidence protected her; she felt her conscience clear; and relying on Heaven's protection, happen what might, she moved forward with a calm and steady step, escorted by the secretary and the steward. After ascending a flight of stairs

and then traversing several corridors, saloons, and ante-rooms, all furnished in the most profusely luxurious style, they reached the private withdrawing-room of the Earl of Essex. The door was opened by an attendant groom of the chambers. Sir Gilley Merrick proceeded no further. But Cuff led the fair visitor up towards the couch, where the earl half sat and half reclined, and then withdrew respectfully and in silence.

Agnes could not for some moments look on the person beside whom she now stood, and whose features at a first glance in entering the large room, she was not able to distinguish. A soft-toned voice said some few words — but she heard them not. She trembled with emotion, she felt that the colour left her cheek; and probably the womanly feeling that her beauty would be cruelly impaired by her agitation acted as much towards her recovery, as the rustling sound of the richly-embroidered silk gown, which told her that the wounded man was making an attempt to rise from the couch. With a sudden effort she raised her looks upon his elegant form and fine countenance, on which a slight paleness had taken the place of the fever-flush of the last few days. After an instant's examination she saw that all was right! It was indeed her former friend who now held her hand, and spoke and looked a thousand welcomes. Totally overcome with pleasure and nervous excitement, she burst into tears, and allowed the earl to place her on the couch, against one of the embroidery-covered cushions on which she leaned her face, and sobbed and wept with violent emotion. The ringing of a silver bell close by brought her to herself again; and she saw evident marks of pain on the features of her noble host from his effort in rising up and reaching the bell from the table. To her great relief a female attendant of most respectable mien obeyed the summons; and Essex, with delicate gallantry, left it to her care to offer what remedies our poor heroine's agitation might require.

A few minutes quite recovered and composed her; and as her eye brightened, and the fine glow of health and animation lighted her countenance up, Essex thought she had grown in beauty with increasing years. Her elegant, though plain and grave-looking apparel, becomingly adapted to her symmetrical form, produced an effect far different to the brown cloth kirtle and cherry-coloured bodice in which he had seen her during

her disguise in Flanders, though even in that she was, he thought, most lovely. His admiration was unbounded as the interview went on. Her ingenuous confidence, her eloquent sketches of her own and her husband's thoughts, feelings, and hopes, her animated congratulations on his own celebrity, and her belief in his power to accomplish almost anything which might depend on Queen Elizabeth's influence, were all put forth in rapid but logical sequence, and Essex was completely carried away in his delighted attention to the now enthusiastic Agnes, for she had found a theme to excite her to the utmost warmth of thought and diction.

He answered her with all the generous frankness which was the distinguishing mark of his character. He forgot the uneasiness of his wound, the weakness it had produced — every thing but his admiration of the beautiful woman he conversed with, and his sad conviction that her hopes were all false and her arduous journey fruitless. In the mildest, but still in most decided, phrase he convinced her — not abruptly, but with delicate gradations of proof — that Queen Elizabeth was for a double reason most hostilely disposed, both towards herself and her husband. She had, as all the world had, heard of the almost miraculously perfect resemblance between Agnes and Mary Stuart; and the vile death-doing * which she had accomplished on our heroine's lovely prototype made the very name of Agnes a sound of horror to her ears. Ghebbard, too, in flying in the face of authority and boldly acting on his own convictions and affections, had always been looked on by her with reprobation rather than approval. And she moreover had no sympathy for married women, whom she regarded almost universally with open hatred or smothered envy. All this was now explained by Essex, with due management, however, of the hateful character of that mistress to whom he, in common with some of the bravest and wisest men of the whole world, had prostrated in all possible ways the dignity and independence of human nature. He further revealed the fact of his having made repeated efforts, when in the very

* We hesitate to affix the positive epithet *murder* to this deed of blood, the previous legal forms softening in some degree its atrocity. But many a murder has been committed with less revolting circumstances than those which marked the cruel and crafty conduct of Elizabeth throughout. It was not, at any rate, *her* shrinkingness from the crime, which prevented the hand of a private assassin from forestalling the stroke of the executioner. See Davison's Apology, Camden's Annals, and the papers of Sir Amias Paulet.

highest triumph of favouritism, to soften her prejudice, and obtain her assistance for our hero and heroine, but invariably without success, and more than once with great risk to his own influence ; and thus Essex explained at once his own fidelity to his vow of friendship and the apparent inconsistency of his never having made any attempt to renew the acquaintanceship, when circumstances might have warranted the highest expectation of advantage.

All this fell upon poor Agnes with a chill and dreary sense of disappointment ; and scarcely could the redeeming conviction of Essex's sincerity bear her up against the shuddering dread with which she reflected that she was in the territory, the power, and the close neighbourhood of the haughty tyrant, so odiously depicted to her even by a friendly representation. Her first feeling was to fly instantly from the country which owned a sway so revolting and humiliating ; and just then her eyes involuntarily became fixed on the full-length portrait of this terrible woman (which her youthful idolater had thus almost always in his observation in the most sacred recess of his privacy), a close copy from the celebrated drawing by Isaac Oliver, which represents Elizabeth in the dress she wore at the thanksgiving in St. Paul's Cathedral, after the defeat of the armada. Represented as she there was, studded with jewels and pearls, with glittering crown on head, bright hair profusely curled and ornamented, sceptre in hand, a face of highly intellectual beauty, and scarcely of middle age, Agnes could not help longing, after all, to see the original of this deception, which the obsequious artist had sent forth to the world, to be multiplied in the now scarcely-to-be-procured print of Crispin de Passe. Our heroine, in the genuine artlessness of her nature, took all those limned lies for fact, and she could not resist the belief that a warm appeal would be yet favourably listened to by the being whose countenance beamed with such sublime benignity.

While this never-to-be-realised hope was eloquently speaking in Agnes's features, on which Essex gazed with a wild mixture of feelings — for so much beauty of mind and person could not fail strangely and strongly to move a man like him — the gentle warning of a muffled bell within the room told him that the female attendant who had before appeared required speech of him on some urgent occasion, for none other

could excuse an intrusion on such a *tête-à-tête* as he was now engaged in. He answered by the sound of his own silver hand-bell; and, with a look of some anxiety, he watched the entrance of the discreet person thus once more summoned. She came in with evident trepidation in her look, but true to her accustomed reserve, she never suffered her eyes to reach the female form which was now seated familiarly on the couch beside her lord. Directing her eyes towards him alone with considerable skill of concentration, she informed him that "Master Henry Cuff needed an instant admission to his noble presence, on matter of imminent haste."

"'Fore God! it must be such, and in earnest, too, or Master Cuff's head will be found too heavy, for all its wit, to rest steadily on his shoulders. Let the fellow come in — with your good leave, most lovely countess — (Agnes bowed assent) that is, if a moment's thought sufficeth to assure him that he breaks not on me thus with some unworthy rumour or message of no account."

"My lord, it concerneth the queen's majesty," said the woman, with a significant shake of the head which spoke much meaning.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Essex, with such a thrill of heart-sinkingness as a schoolboy suffers at the approach of his pedagogue tyrant.

"Come in, good Henry! quick, man, quick!" and in an instant the secretary was in the presence of his lord.

"Speak out, Cuff!" continued he, in apparent forgetfulness of his fair visiter by his side. "What wills her gracious highness of me? Does one from Whitehall wait? Hast thou no missive from my great mistress's hand? What does the queen require?"

"In God's sooth, my noble lord, I know not, but your lordship will ere long have proof of it by the evidence of your own ears; the queen is at this moment landing from the barge-royal at the garden-gate stair, to take your lordship graciously by surprise."

This was said with an habitual sneer, which the astounded Essex had not time to notice.

"God's pity! can this be true?" exclaimed he, and rising abruptly and seizing his secretary's arm, he hurried, unmindful of his hurt, towards a window commanding a full view of

the gardens and river. From that position he was indeed enabled to judge of the fact, that Elizabeth approached in person to pay him a condescending visit of inquiry ; and as the sun, now sloping westward, shone full upon the scene, he saw her proud figure ascending the steps which Agnes had a few hours previously mounted, leaning on the arm of his arch enemy, Robert Cecil the secretary, by whose presence on this occasion she meant to temper the pride which she calculated on its exciting in her impetuous kinsman and favourite. Sir John Fortescue, master of the wardrobe, the queen's guide and assistant in the study of Greek and Latin, with a few other gentlemen of her household, and three or four ladies closest in attendance on her person, formed the whole party which accompanied her on this impromptu visit, except a small detachment of the palace-guard, which followed close, in another boat, the track of the royal barge.

Essex saw the queen step firmly, and with her wonted air of pride, up the steps and on the platform which overlooked the river. He seemed fascinated by the sight of the woman who held him in such slavish thralldom, and appeared to have forgotten all else in the world. Elizabeth was then closing fast towards sixty years of age. Her erect tall stature was unimpaired by time, and its rigid character was well supported by the harsh style of female dress then in fashion. But with this exception she bore all the marks of age on her person. Her faded complexion and sunken cheeks, decaying teeth and shrivelled skin, spoke a tale, and a moral, too obvious not to be clearly read by any one save herself. The red hair, which former flatteries had transmuted into "golden locks," was now changed by the metallic touch of time into iron-grey ; and all the aid of studded stomacher and thick-flounced frill could not conceal the fact of her bosom's symmetry having wholly disappeared. Like all those faded beauties who strive to dazzle when they can no longer delight, this old coquette had great reliance on velvets, golden fringe, and precious stones ; and on this occasion she was, as usual, profusely decked with those adornments. Her attendant ladies were richly dressed, but far eclipsed by her magnificent display.

The bewildered household had all rushed out into the gardens on the announcement of the queen's near approach ; but until the barge actually stopped at the stairs, no one could be-

lieve that she meant to come in this unexpected way, to throw all Essex House, including its noble owner, into confusion. But the pleasure of creating embarrassment and annoyance to her dearest friends was among the peculiar enjoyments of this "mild blossome of all graciousnesse." The consequent bustle was at once painful and ludicrous. The serving-men were seen running in every direction in search of their new doublets and best-badged cloaks; the household halberdiers donned in all haste, and imperfectly enough, their various accoutrements; the band of cornets and sackbuts kept for state occasions, hurried along towards the scene of action, some with instruments, some without, and few with a sufficient portion of breath in their lungs to blow even the discordant blast of welcome which hailed her highness as she gained the platform. There the important Sir Gilley Merrick, with his straggling and one-headed band of grooms and varlets, the old lodge-keeper and the two gate-porters, were all duly prostrate, in the servile custom of the times, while the virgin queen passed by them also many dogs, without deigning a word or look in return to their base homage.

The delighted eyes of Essex took in the whole scene, but was evidently absorbed by the one great object of attraction till Cuff, his cunning secretary (in the true meaning of the word, for he knew his lord's most privy thoughts) asked him in a sly under-tone, "if he meant to present the strange lady to her highness in that private room or in the presence-hall."

Roused by this hint to a recollection of his situation, the earl started round, and, more deadly pale than when his recent wound had bled most freely, he stammered out to Agnes some explanation of the absolute necessity of her being concealed during the queen's visit. Agnes, who had comprehended the whole affair, and who saw Essex's terrors in the workings of his countenance, was as anxious as he was to be hid for ever from the sight of Elizabeth, whose rumored approach had quickly put to flight the passing vision roused by the examination of her portrait. She was ready to accede to any proposition for immediate escape, and she tremblingly expressed this to her equally frightened host. Cuff was about to lead her from the room, when a loud bustle was heard in the antechamber, and the galleries beyond, once

approaching by the by-ways of the mansion, to prepare their
and have some little show of order as the august visiter
de her advance by the great stair and the great gallery.
is beset, Essex had too much delicacy to expose Agnes to
disgraceful measure of a furtive removal in the sight of
very varlets of his household, who would of course attach
grace to her visit and consequently to her character. The
mamma was serious. The time for deliberation short. The
covery of any female visiter — but particularly of one so
to excite the queen's most hateful passions — might have
light down a shower of vengeance on the head of her dis-
quished slave. — What was to be done?

"The book closet, my lord — the lady will surely consent
take refuge there?" suggested the wily secretary.

"Oh, yes! anywhere," said Agnes, "to save me from the
of this terrible queen of yours, and you, my lord, from
risk of blame on my account."

In a moment more, our heroine, palpitating, faint, and as
as death, was safely ensconced in a corner of the earl's
ate library, a small but elegant room, opening out of the
drawing-room on one side of the chimney-place; his
ding apartment, of not much larger dimensions, being at
other side. Scarcely had Agnes disappeared, and Essex
in his place on his couch again, when the doors were
ed with great solemnity by Sir Gilley Merrick, the master
be wardrobe advanced announcing the sovereign's approach,
close following came Elizabeth herself, walking alone and
wed by her maids of honour, Cecil, and the rest. Essex
from the couch, though with pain and difficulty, advanced
towards the door, and threw himself on his knees before the
queen. She stooped and bade him rise, gazed on him with
expression of fondness, and holding both his hands, while
till impressed his kisses upon hers, she exclaimed,

"And all this great suffering, this great risk, all for the
of us! Ah, my brave young kinsman, thou hast tried
sovereign's love too keenly. Yet all is now forgiven —
not forgotten! Essex, thou art ill — there is no colour
in thy cheeks. Where is thy physician? In good sooth I
ought not to find thee thus."

Essex replied, with truth but not with candour, that "it

was the overcoming emotion of her majesty's sudden approach that somewhat affected his weak state."

"Well, we must not wait too long nor risk thy relapse from over-feeling," said the queen; her vanity which had led her to believe that Essex had fought his duel solely from his admiration of her person, taking it now for granted that it was a paroxysm of love on seeing her so abruptly which caused his emotion. She only mistook the cause, not the effect. A slavish dread of her power, a paramount notion of her divinity of right, and habitual abasement before "God's anointed," composed the elements of what Elizabeth's weakness fancied to be a personal passion; and created a real and deep sentiment of idolatry for the sovereign, which happily can find no place in the breasts of free-born men. The queen took her seat on the couch, and insisted on Essex's reposing on one of the high cushions at her feet. And thus placed, the bystanders looking on with profound respect, she proceeded with anxious inquiries after his wound, and with a tedious lecture on the duty of men towards their sovereigns, "to whom they owed their state and service, lives and limbs, and from whose gracious breath alone they had a right to take warrant for any risk or peril," with much more of the same impressive absurdity, to prove the high prerogative of the prince and the lowly pretensions of the subject.

"And now, my good lord," said she rising, (after having partaken some slight refreshment, a manchet and a glass of Malvoisie, a rare indulgence, as she seldom drank wine,) "we must end our visit, nor risk your health too much by the stretch of your regard to do us honour. Your visible agitation is a grateful proof of true duty; and well it pleaseth us to see—though truth to say we owe no thanks on flattery's score to the deep daubing of Master Oliver's copyist—to see that our image ornaments your private room. We take it, good Essex, as no small proof of love."

"My gracious mistress, to whom I owe all I have on earth, it is but fitting that your divine person alone should fill my eyes, as it doth fill my heart," replied the noble flatterer. Elizabeth held out her hand once more to receive his ardent kisses, whereat the superannuated spinster waxed still more tender than before. Essex, though highly elated by the triumph which her evident affection during this visit afforded him over

Cecil, in whose presence it was thus displayed, felt no small relief, at the near prospect of being freed from the risk which this perilous visit had promised at its opening.

"And so, my kind young kinsman," resumed the queen, "we may now fairly say that we know Essex House to the core, as we know its noble master. And it is but just to praise where all is so well ordered. The state apartments in which we have erewhile been received with much and honourable service, are in a good taste of splendour, but this private suit of rooms is to our liking still more graceful, and we must see if all the rest are in keeping with this one. What is there here beyond?"

"This door, madam, opens on my sleeping chamber, where if a wooden truck were placed instead of a down bed, it were too good for your majesty's poor servant did not his dreams run nightly on your too great bounty."

"Ah, flatterer!" said the queen, smiling and tapping her favourite with a diamond-studded fan. "But we will not enter there; for we would not leave an impress of our person on the fancy to break your slumbers altogether, now in your great need of restoring nights and quiet days. And what is here?"

"That—that, may it please your majesty, is nought but a poor small book-closet—a—"

"Ha! that privy chamber of the mind I must examine, I shall see there your studies, my young sir. Your favourite authors—your secret taste in reading! 'Tis not in gaudy galleries meant for public show that men keep the books they feed on. Open yon door, Sir John! you are my guide in study, and shall judge of the earl's good taste. I warrant we shall find fair store of amorous tales or loving ditties on these secret shelves."

As the obedient master of the wardrobe laid his hand on the lock, Essex sprang from his couch, and interposed between the queen and the door.

"I pray you, my most gracious mistress," said he, in great agitation, "ask not to enter there—it is not in seemly state to receive your highness—the books are scattered—loose papers are on the floor—the air is mouldy—it is but an uncouth lumber room—"

"Why, my Lord of Essex, what does this mean?" asked the queen sternly. "Are you distraught, to change colour

thus like a guilty girl because your books are out of place? A mouldy lumber-room, forsooth, close to this richly decked saloon! I tell you, my lord, if the pest raged within I'll enter. What! is there a mystery of alchemy or magic there within? Does it touch our sacred person? Have you some unfledged treason hatching that you would keep pent up till it is ready to destroy us? Answer, I say, and truly if you would stand well and firmly in this world, my Lord Essex!"

"My more than sovereign, my very being's arbiter," cried the earl, falling on his knees and catching her robe, "those are cruel words, the offspring of most harsh thoughts, towards one who lives but in your service and your favour."

"How durst you, then, oppose my will?" asked the angry despot, her passion rising higher at every moment.

"I oppose not, my mistress,—but on my heart's knees I beg, for your own sake, rather than for mine, that you persist not to enter there."

"Not enter! By God's passion! but I will, though Essex House crumble to its foundation and bury me in its ruins. Come, gentlemen, and stand by your queen against this bold earl's presumption. Follow me all into the secret den!"

Essex, seeing opposition vain, rose from his knees and stood with his hands clasped together, throwing a look on Cuff who stood in mute expectation of the issue of the scene. Cecil, whose keen eyes were fixed alternately on Essex and his secretary, now stepped forward close to the queen, and before she could push open the mysterious door he implored her to pause, saying that he thought he observed symptoms which justified a strong suspicion of some really dangerous combination within the closet.

"Then, if there be danger it is fit that I should confront it first," said the queen, well satisfied all the while that she ran no risk of personal harm from any machination of her devoted favourite; "stand back till I am within, then let who loves me follow me!"

With these words she forcibly threw open the closet door; but she had not advanced two steps when she uttered a piercing shriek, and with a succession of appalling cries she fell forwards on the floor, burying her face in her hands.

The whole company, male and female, rushed in, and discovered Agnes, standing in an attitude of extreme terror, her

pale countenance still more ghastly from the dead light reflected on it from the blue taffeta window-curtain, on which the setting sun threw its last faint beams. Well might any one who in that superstitious age had the blood of a fellow-creature on their head have taken our hapless heroine for a supernatural visitant of earth. Elizabeth had no doubt but that the ghost of Mary Stuart stood before her. She had never seen her unfortunate rival; but her beautiful features were too deeply graven in her mind, from the time when she used in affected friendship to kiss her picture * until those latter days, when, conscience-stricken, she saw her in every shadow of tortured fancy, bleeding beneath the axe.

The present weakness was not, however, lasting. The powerful mind of Elizabeth received, but could not long retain, a shock of terror. She suffered herself to be raised from the floor; and her incoherent expressions betraying her alarmed imaginings, Cecil, Fortescue, and the others took the best means of dispelling the illusion by showing her the living loveliness which had caused her fright. She gazed on fiercely, and even laid hold of and rudely shook, our now indignant heroine, to convince herself, that any being of flesh and blood could so resemble her former victim, whose spirit was in the skies. Shame and rage, at the weakness she had exposed to so many observers, next possessed her almost to phrenzy. She turned its whole torrent upon Essex, who was again on his knees before her striving to appease her fury.

“So, base and wicked recreant, you would play a trick upon your mistress?” cried she, as she strided through the chamber, with livid looks, her grey hair disordered, and her whole air showing a sybil’s fury without her inspiration — “So; you would sport with my tender fancy and conspire with a loose wanton to work on my woman’s sorrow for my poor sister that is gone! Out on you, Essex, for a tainted and a loathed traitor! It was unmanly as well as traitorous — but, by God’s Son! thou shalt rue deeply and pay dearly for this frolic, with this vile masquer hired for the base occasion!”

It was in vain that Essex pleaded his efforts to prevent her entering the closet, and his agitation lest the stranger lady might meet her majesty’s view; or that Cecil implored her “to maintain her dignity — whatever might be thought of the

* See Sir James Melvil’s *Memoirs*.

earl's conduct." She would not be pacified. On Agnes she heaped unbounded opprobrium; and at length our heroine, utterly disgusted, but roused to indignation, replied to her question as to who and what she was.

"I am, madam, a countess in my own right, of a line as noble and more ancient than the Tudors. I was by virtue of my husband's title a sovereign princess, till the abandonment of false friends and the cowardly standing off of selfish princes lost us our state and dignity. My name is Agnes de Mansfelt — my husband's I need not now tell to the Queen of England."

Elizabeth, struck by the proud demeanour of the beautiful woman before her, could not withhold her admiration — but she gave it no expression. She, on the contrary, loaded her with sarcasm; and gave Ghebhard Truchses a full measure of abuse, as an apostate bishop, whose rebellious example had worked nought but mischief, and whose misconduct to the church he had forsaken brought nothing but disgrace to that he had adopted. Agnes retorted with calm dignity every new burst of vituperation, by a plain statement of the events which brought her to England; till the crowned virago, worn out by her own violence, and quite satisfied of the truth of all she heard from our heroine, at length retired from the scene, refusing to listen to any explanation on the part of Essex, and giving most peremptory orders to Sir John Fortescue that Agnes was to be without one hour's delay removed on board the first ship sailing from the river for any of the Dutch ports; and so put far beyond the chance of any further meeting with Elizabeth herself, and out of the reach of any renewed visit to Essex, which might again rouse her despotic jealousy. She would not even admit of the courtesy of a leave-taking on his part with his outraged visiter. And all this self-decreed disgrace to England and its queen was executed to the letter, but with decorous regret, by the learned and virtuous functionary thus brutally deputed to the ungracious office. A vessel sailing by that very tide was immediately engaged for this purpose; and a purse of a thousand crowns was placed in the skipper's hands — by Elizabeth's orders — for Agnes's use. This she indignantly refused to touch; and she turned her back for ever on the country in which she had passed but a dozen hours of most chequered and perturbed feelings, her

mind filled with this new and frightful specimen of woman-kind, one too often held up by servile pens as a model, but whom it is more just to point out as a warning, to any future princess whose high destinies may call her to preside over the moral feelings and the feminine virtues of this great country. Essex found speedy means, by working on the cupidity and vanity of his mistress, to regain his slippery footing in her favour; and ten years more sufficed to bring to a close the drama of his brief career, and to give the crowning proof of the bold blood-thirstiness, which was but one of the many odious qualities that disgraced (infinitely more than the bright ones dignified) the character of Elizabeth of England.

* * * * *

The scene now shifts once more; and presents us Ghebbard and Agnes (sometime after the English episode) fixed in the city of Strasburg, for life and death. He, by means of his German friends, at length succeeded in obtaining the modest post of canon to the choir of that town; thus ending life in the very station in which his manhood was first employed, having passed through gradations of greatness and of ruin to which few men are destined. Ghebbard continued in the protestant faith, which he had adopted from conviction, and practised with purity; believing it to be the form best adapted to promote the moral and political welfare of mankind, but tolerating in all his fellow-christians the right of worshipping God in the mode which their consciences approved, and maintaining that no man should withhold from others the same unbounded freedom of opinion which he claims for himself. Of Agnes we shall only say she was, and remained as ever, her husband's second self, and we may emphatically add, his better-half!

The annals of the Mansfelt family tell us that Ernest, Agnes's elder brother, after having served in a distinguished manner the King of Denmark and the Emperor Mathias, and being employed by both in "many weighty embassies," was elected *rector magnificus* of the University of Jena, where he held one most famous oration; and that he had a principal hand in the celebrated Witzensteinischen or Lathringischen contest, in the year 1604, after which epoch history tells nothing more of him. His brother Christopher, under the

tender cultivation of his wife, Emma Von Kriechlingen, so completely threw off his outward and early character of impetuous and hair-brained vivacity, as to be designated in the chronicle by the *sobriquet* of "the dove," and he left after him three sons and a daughter to hand down his own and his wife's virtues to posterity.

Respecting the minor characters of our tale we cannot be as minute with the same certainty of truth. The curious journal of Heinrich Von Sweinishen, discovered about sixteen or seventeen years ago in the library of the Castle of Furstenstein, in Silesia (of which country he was a native), and of which we have already availed ourselves, relates that after the failure of his master the Prince of Liegnitz's speculations in the Rhine country and in Holland, that redoubted adventurer proposed to his faithful finance minister to proceed to England, for no less a purpose than to demand in marriage Elizabeth herself—and in the mean time to borrow or beg from her the sum of fifty thousand crowns! "But my humble character," says Von Sweinishen, "revolted at his preposterous proposal, and I made such persuasive remonstrances that his highness seemed to give up that plan, for he never again mentioned it, nor indeed did he speak to me for several days afterwards." We think it a pity that the doubts of the Ritter Heinrich marred this measure, which would, if executed, have no doubt given fresh occasion for some chronicler to paint another sketch of the "sweete floure's" amiable energy.

About the same period as that of Agnes's visit to London, that is to say, some time in the year 1590, and about ten years after the earlier scenes of this tale, an eye-witness relates that Jerome Scotus, the magician, appeared at Prague accompanied by a troop of well-armed cavaliers, with many coaches glittering with gold, and that he lived there for some time in much magnificence! The imperial writ for his arrest, issued at the demand of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, it was never found possible to execute, for the same cleverness and presence of mind with which he safely swam the Rhine, on the memorable night recorded in these pages, enabled him by a thousand shifts and turns to baffle the pursuits of his indignant enemies and to appear for many years in various parts of Europe, mortal meteor being nothing but evil to his fellow creature.

"And what," may the curious reader ask, "was the final fate of the arch-impostor?" To which we answer, "What?" No record of his death exists. And there may even now be those who believe that he still lives, a wanderer in everlasting vileness on the polluted earth. That belief, as a true romance writer, the author of this book must disavow. Scotus no longer lives bodily in this world; but has not his spirit been given in scattered inheritance to the thousands of mean and sordid charlatans, who exist to-day, and who only want an age as credulous and contemporaneous as ignorant, to practise the arts and crimes which made Jerome Scotus infamous.

NOTE.

The foregoing story might have been fairly entitled "An Episode of History," for all its main characters and events are strictly historical. It requires, on that account, a few notices of reference to the authorities on which it is founded, to allow the curious reader to judge in what instances advantage has been taken of doubtful circumstances, in favour of some of the personages, or in how far probability has been trusted to when there were no precise facts to build on.

The chief of what relates to Ghebbard and Agnes is contained in Schmidt's History of Germany, in the account of the Archbishopric of Cologne by Süss, in Koeler's biography of Ghebbard, mentioned in a note to the present work, and also in Ab Isselt, *de Bello Coloniensi*.

The most detailed account of the transactions between Jerome Scotus and the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg is to be found in the amusing and instructive collection called *Curiositatem Weimar*. But the magician is specially noticed in every work which treats of Ghebbard Truchses ever so incidentally; and it was indeed a short passage in Strada (as quaint and bigoted as any thing in his history) that first attracted my attention to the story of the reforming archbishop and his arch-betrayer.

The Universal Lexicon abounds in details of the families of Mansfelt and Waldburg-Truchses. And I ought, perhaps, to add, in conclusion, that history has been more severe on both my heroine and her friend Duchess Anne, than any thing in my book would warrant. Some harsh names are used towards both, and some startling statements—I must avow it—brought forward to their disfavour, in

various Latin and German works. I will not particularly say those. The ill-natured may find them out if they choose. I am of the same mind with old Burton, who "could willingly write at a faire lady's faults, when not bound by the stricte lawes of his (as assuredly no romance writer is) to tell the rigid truth."

THE END.

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